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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EXPERIENCE OF FRIENDSHIP

BY

MARNIE ROBB

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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Date: April 23, 1986

I am not alone. There's another who sees me, values me, trusts me, is strengthened by me - another whom I see and value and trust and am strengthened by. We share laughter, we share sorrow, in some measure we share life - no, because I have a friend, and am my friend's friend, neither of us is alone (Brenton, 1974, p. 12).

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EXPERIENCE OF FRIENDSHIP submitted by MARNIE ROBB in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY.

John Osborne
Supervisor

Fost L Walker

Date: April 23, 1986

# ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to arrive at a holistic understanding of the experience of friendship. After a critical review of the natural scientific and phenomenological research on friendship, and a review of the basic assumptions of each paradigm, the appropriateness of the phenomenological methodology for use in the present research research was indicated.

The six co-researchers who shared in the present study (three men and three women) were graduate students in counselling psychology. Their ages ranged from early to late twenties. Four of these people had recently undergone major relationship changes and were engaged in a reflective process about the meaningfulness of the present relationships in their lives.

Data was collected on an individual basis. Two of the co-researchers were interviewed; these interviews were taped, then later transcribed verbatim. Data collection with the remaining co-researchers began with a written description of their experiences of friendship based upon a series of questions. Co-researchers were then interviewed when it was necessary for them to clarify what they had written. The descriptions provided by the interviews and written protocols formed the raw data from which phenomenological analysis proceeded.

Upon thematic analysis of the protocols, the following themes of the experience of friendship emerged:

(A) initial meeting/first impression, (B) beginning of friendship, (C) attraction, (D) similarities, (E) differences, (F) evolving process, (G) shared world, (H) freedom, (I) nurturance, (J) dissolution, and (K) isolation. The following sub-themes were identified for (F) evolving process: F(1) developmental process, F(2) over time and distance separation, and F(3) old friends. The following sub-themes were identified for (G) shared world: G(1) fundamentals, G(2) caring/integrity, G(3) giving/meaning G(4) support, G(5) acceptance G(6) understanding, and G(7) emotional tone.

However, the importance of these themes was not in their isolated listing, but in the comprehensive understanding of friendship arrived at in the integrative analysis where the themes were aggregated and expanded. Further analysis resulted in a fundamental description of the experience of friendship.

Some tentative conclusions as to the essence of the "richest" experience of friendship so far as this study is concerned were drawn. These conclusions referred to friendship as a movement toward personhood and as an opportunity for self-transcendence. The cyclicle nature of friendship was also affirmed. Finally, the necessity of commitment and respect for integrity within the friendship relationship was illuminated.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. ORIENTATION TO THE EXPERIENCE OF FRIENDSHIP AND RELATED RESEARCH QUESTIONS....................1

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE..............................4

Natural Scientific Research..........................6

Definitions and Structural Elements of Friendship..............................6

Definitions..........................................6

Structures...........................................9

Synoptic Overview of Definitions and Structures of Friendship..................13

Function of Friendship...............................14

Friendship Classifications...........................19

Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Friendship....................23

Phenomenological Research............................30

Methodological Choice................................36

III. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS........................39

The Natural Scientific Resesarch Method..............39

The Phenomenological Research Method.................45

Phenomenology in Relation to the Overall Perspective of Human Science Research.......45

Origin of Phenomenology..............................48

Characteristics of Phenomenology.....................51

Synoptic Overview of Methodological Considerations.......................................56

IV. PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY....................58
Method....................59
Orienting to the Experience of Friendship......59
Co-Researchers....................59
Explicating Assumptions and
Pre-understandings (Bracketing)..............60
Procedure....................62
V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION....................66
Initial Reading....................66
Conducting Thematic Analysis....................66
First-Order Clustering of Themes:
Arranging Data in Tabular Form..............68
Second-Order Clustering of Themes:
Synthesizing the Data....................72
Integrative Analysis....................79
VI. GENERAL DISCUSSION....................109
A Description of the Experience of
Friendship....................109
Contributions and Tentative Conclusions
of the Present Research Study..............112
Methodological Concerns....................119
Implications for Further Research..............121
Unexpected Findings....................122

REFERENCES....................125

# LIST OF TABLES

| Table | Description | Page |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Literature Review Outline | 5 |
| 2 | First-Order Clustering of Themes | 68 |
| 3 | Second-Order Clustering of themes | 73 |

# CHAPTER 1

# ORIENTATION TO THE EXPERIENCE OF FRIENDSHIP AND RELATED RESEARCH QUESTIONS

One warm summer evening some time ago I was setting the table at Amanda's house. Ami, Amanda's seven year old daughter, was helping me position the knives and forks. She stopped in the middle of this process and just stood there, watching me. I felt her expectant gaze and turned to her, wondering what it was she wanted. Our eyes locked for a moment and from her expression I knew that she was curious and thoughtful.

"Marnie," she spoke with a child's innocent depth, "is my mom your best friend?"

I recall my moment's hesitation in answering. Time distorted as my mind flooded with thoughts..."What is a best friend? For that matter what is a friend?"

Ami continued to stare, "Well, is she?"

Again, another hesitation as my mind raced, searching for an answer:

Amanda's embarrassed voice, urging Ami to set the table, broke into my thoughts, brought me back to consciousness, back to the room, back to Amanda and Ami, and most startlingly, back to the immediacy of answering this question.

I recall answering somewhat lamely, "Amanda's certainly ONE of my best friends...."

After this incident I spent some time contemplating friendship and what it meant to me. The intensity with which I pursued this topic accelerated after the death of a long-time friend. Wendy had been dying of cancer. I had known she was near death, but decided to put off my visit to her in Calgary until I had finished my intensive six week statistics course at university. By the time I actually saw her, Wendy could no longer recognize me. She died the next day. In the emptiness that followed I realized how much she had meant to me.

I began to view my friendships in a fresh way. I no longer took them for granted, and began to re-evaluate their importance in my life. As I began to discuss my interest in friendship with others, I found that they became animated, each with their own story to tell. Through these talks, I came to realize that the experience of friendship is one that touches us all.

> I kept being reminded again and again how really universal the experience of friendship is. Everywhere and in all ages people have formed this very same tie with each other - this tie that is not based on the binding forces of kinship, marriage, or romance (Brenton, 1974, p. 14).

Through a process of reflection I began to develop an orientation towards the phenomenon of friendship. I wondered: "What is the nature of the experience of friendship? Of what importance are friends; how do they change our lives? What are some of the difficulties experienced in friendship?

I have not raised the questions in order to turn them into hypotheses to be proven. Instead, these questions are a starting point for an open-ended process of inquiry. As Gadamer (1970) has indicated, "the essence of the question is the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities" (p. 266). It is my intent to explore these questions in order to arrive at a deeper, personal understanding of friendship.

# CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As human beings, we continually strive to make sense of our world, to seek the "truth." Over time we have used such things as wise men, oracles, spirits, and legends in an effort to expand and perfect our knowledge. We search for the absolute truth, yet the unfolding process of reality is never fully disclosed (Hixon, 1978). In more recent times, this search has led to empirical experimentation in an attempt to objectify knowledge (Polkinghorne, 1980).

In this continued exploration for understanding, we have also employed definitions. The Oxford Concise Dictionary (1983) defined friendship as "being friends, the relation between friends" (p. 394) with the definition of friends being: "one joined to another in intimacy and mutual benevolence independent of sexual or family love" (p. 394). If we stop to reflect for a moment, we can realize that while this definition identified the relational nature of friendship, it is a greatly simplified vision of the actual experience of friendship. Our personal knowledge may tell us that the experience of friendship is too intricate to be portrayed by a single definition.

The complexity of friendship is indicated by the topical diversity of the research on friendship. As I perused the literature, it became evident that a meaningful review of the research would require an organizational schemata. Thus, I have divided the literature review into two parts.

In the first part of the chapter, natural scientific research of friendship is reviewed according to (a) definitions and structural elements, (b) functions, (c) classifications, and (d) same and cross-sex classifications. Subheadings within each section are used for further organizational clarification. In the second part of the chapter, phenomenological research is reviewed. Following this, I propose the use of a phenomenological methodology for my research on the experience of friendship. Table 1 allows the reader a visual overview of the topics in this chapter.

Table 1

LITERATURE REVIEW OUTLINE

Natural Scientific Research

- Definitions and Structural Elements of Friendship
    - Definitions
    - Structures
        - Sex differences in friendship structures
        - Differences in women's friendship according to age and development
        - Distinguishing structural elements: friendship as different from acquaintance and romantic love
- Synoptic Overview of Definitions and Structures of Friendship

- Function of Friendship
    - Psychological Development
    - Social Status
    - Intimacy, Mental Health, and Physical Health

Sharing

Friendship Classification
Miscellaneous Classification
Classification by Intensity
Classification by Quality

Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Friendships
Male Friendships
Cross-Sex Friendships
Self-Disclosure in Friendships
Synoptic Overview of Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Friendships

Phenomenological Research
Synoptic Overview of Phenomenological Research

Methodological Choice
Natural Scientific Research

## Definitions and Structural Elements of Friendship

### Definitions

The definition of friendship provided by the Oxford Concise Dictionary (1983) indicated friendship to be relational. This basic theme of friendship as relational is identified by other researchers as well. For example, Booth and Hess (1974) defined friendship as "a primary relationship between two individuals unrelated by kinship" (p. 38). Bell viewed friendship as "a voluntary, close and enduring social relationship" (1981, p. 402). If we consider our personal experiences of the initricate nature of friendship and the multitudinous possibilites of all that friendship might be, the inadequacy of these simplistic definitions becomes glaringly apparent.

Some researchers have defined friendship in greater detail. Allan (1979) outlined the following analysis of an "ideal" friendship:

1. Friendship is seen as a personal relation. By personal Allan meants that:

(a) Friendship is a relation between individuals, not members of groups or collectives.

(b) Friendship is a private relationship of concern only to those who are the friends. Although others may try to influence a person's friendship choice, there are few societal conventions governing who can and cannot become friends.

(c) Ideally, in a friendship people should be themselves, with all pretence wiped away.

2. Friend relations are voluntary relationships.

(a) If the people involved in a relationship see their interaction to be based more on formal role positions (for example of boss and employee) than a choice exercised freely, they are unlikely to think of this as a friendship.

Another detailed definition was Wright's (1974), which included eight components: (1) voluntary interdependence, (2) person-qua-person, (3) utility, (4) ego support, (5) stimulation, (6) maintenance difficulties, (7) self affirmation, and (8) total friendship. As well as emphasizing the relational aspect of friendship, the above definitions included the concept of voluntary association.

Wright (1978) viewed this as a crucial element in the definition of friendship.

A sampling of various definitions of friendship portrays commonalities in the elucidation of friendship as a voluntary, relational association. However, diversity in the types of definitions can also be seen. The definitions of Booth and Hess (1974) and Bell (1981) are operational definitions. Their structured way of defining friendship allows other readers to clearly know which relationships can be identified as friendships. This facilitates understanding and replication of these studies.

However, this simplification of the concept of friendship may pose limitations in that the structure of friendship is presupposed. The structure is limited to the author's conception of friendship and does not allow for the individual's actual experience of friendship. For example, Booth and Hess's (1974) definition eliminates the possibility of friendship between brother and sister, parent and child, husband and wife. Friendships of short duration are not accounted for by Bell's (1981) definition.

Allan's (1979) and Wright's (1974) analyses of friendship illuminate the phenomenon more fully. However, Allan's description is of an elusive "ideal" friendship. We might again wonder: What is the description of the actual experience of friendship? Wright's (1978) self-criticism of his model of friendship is that it is "merely a handful of interesting variables" (p. 196). He continues to say that the major weakness of this model is an absence of self-reference in the reflection of friendship. That is, subjects talked about friendships in relation to themselves, but the model did not allow for a clear perspective of this relation of friend to self.

## Structures

In the review of friendship definitions we saw that researchers identified variables common to friendship. Other researchers have looked at how friendship structures differ according to sex, age group, development, and distinguishing factors (e.g., Weiss & Lowenthal, 1973; Goldman, Cooper, Ahern & Corsini, 1981). A review of these differentiating structures follows.

Sex differences in friendship structures. Through a process of content analysis on interview data of 216 men and women at four stages of life, Weiss and Lowenthal (1973) described five clear dimensions of friendship: (1) commonality, (2) reciprocity, (3) role modeling, (4) compatability, and (5) continuity and proximity. Commonality between friends was found to be more important to men; reciprocity was more important to women. Here we begin to see that friendship means different things to different people.

Differences in women's friendship structures according to age and development. Friendship structures differ between sexes. They also differ within a sex group. Goldman et al. (1981) used twenty categories (based on Bigelow (1977)) to investigate the friendship expectations of women at six life-cyle stages. Their findings indicated that women in each age group considered the categories of Common Interests and Activities, and Friend as Giver as important. Intimacy emerged as important for all but the oldest age group (65+). These three categories closely resembled the "similarity" and "reciprocity" dimensions which Lowenthal, Thurnher, and Chiriboga (1976) found accounted for 57% of the statements about friends made by their sample. These findings suggest that critical functions of friendship are established at an early age and continue throughout the life cycle.

In the same study, Goldman et al. (1981) found that some categories were not consistent to all age groups. The categories of Ego Reinforcement and Admiration were prominent in friendship descriptions of high school students but rarely used by junior high students; the category of humorous and entertaining declined between adolescence and adulthood; the category of family commonalities increased sharply with adults. While some characteristics of friendship seemed to be stable across all friendships, others seemed to be more developmentally dependent.

Distinguishing structural elements: friendship as different from acquaintance and romantic love. Other researchers presented structural elements which they felt could be used to distinguish friendship from other relations (Knapp & Harwood, 1977; K.E. Davis, 1984). Knapp and Harwood (1977) arrived at six factors important in the formation of intimate same-sex friends through the use of an attitudinal scale questionnaire. These are (1) unital attraction, (2) personableness, (3) proximity, (4) attitudinal similarity, (5) intimate accessibility, and (6) recriprocal candor. The authors hypothesized that the last three factors are critical ingredients of friendship. Their absence may result in what is generally called acquaintance as opposed to friendship.

In an attempt to distinguish between friendship and romantic love relationships, K. E. Davis (1984) originally proposed eight essential characteristics of friendship. These were (1) enjoyment, (2) acceptance, (3) trust, (4) respect, (5) mutual assistance, (6) confiding, (7) understanding, and (8) spontaneity. Davis hypothesized that a romantic love relationship would share the characteristics of friendship plus what he termed the "Passion Cluster" ((1) fascination, (2) exclusiveness, and (3) sexual desire) and the "Caring Cluster" ((1) giving the utmost, and (2) being a champion/advocate). The results of Davis' questionnaire and survey interviews confirmed his hypothesis. The levels of confiding, understanding, spontaneity, and mutual assistance were identical in both friendship and love relationships. Also as expected, the passion cluster served to differentiate spouses and lovers from best friends. Counter to expectations, best friendships were seen as more stable than spouse/lover relationships. The expected difference in being a champion/advocate of the other's interests was not supported. Lovers more than friends were likely to endorse the statement that they enjoyed doing things with (the name of lover or best friend) than doing them with others. Davis felt this may suggest that a typical love relationship meets a greater range of human needs than a friendship does.

We have seen that researchers have identified distinguishing structures of friendship according to sex, age, development, and degree. There are common themes which run throughout these various structures of friendship. These themes are: commonalities, reciprocity, intimate closeness, disclosure, proximity, affect, and personableness. However, friendship is once again being explored according to pre-set structures which do not allow for other than a normative reality. For example, Goldman et al. (1981) rated open-ended questionnaires according to Bigelow's (1977) twenty friendship expectations. Thus, subject's information is fit into an existing set of categories which may distort the subject's intended meaning.

Synoptic Overview of Definitions and Structures of Friendship

Researchers differed in their conceptions of the critical structures of friendship. Wright (1978) believed that voluntary association and affective friendship ties are the crux of friendship. Knapp and Harwood (1977) saw attitudinal similarity, intimate accessibility, and reciprocal candor to be the ingredients which distinguish friends from acquaintances. K. E. Davis (1984) examined the distinction between friends and romantic lovers. Other researchers indicated that friendship structures may differ according to age or sex.

The complexity of friendship begins to emerge. It becomes apparent that there is no single factor which conclusively defines friendship; it is defined disjunctively rather than conjunctively. That is, it is not necessary for a friendship to have all of the characteristics of any given definition. However, there do seem to be some friendship themes which are more predominant than others. The most pervasive concepts are the relational nature and voluntary association of friendship. Other thematic similarities are: affect and personableness, proximity, commonalities, and intimate closeness and disclosure.

One of the conceptual limitations of much of the research reviewed in this section is that the reported experience of friendship is constrained by the authors' pre-conceptions. For example, behavioral definitions limit friendship to be outside the realm of kinship and short-term relationships.

## The Function of Friendship

In the previous section, research was examined to see what information it held regarding the definition and structure of friendship. In this section, research on the function of friendship will be explored according to psychological development, social status, intimacy, physical health, mental health, and sharing.

### Psychological Development

A review of the literature indicated that friendship is an important factor in the psychological development of individuals. Friendship facilitates the development of self-esteem and a healthy self-concept (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Duck, 1983; Sullivan, 1953). This may occur directly when a friend compliments us or lets us know of other people's favourable comments. More indirectly, self-worth is developed with the realization that a friend chooses to spend time with us rather than someone else. A sense of importance is gained when a friend listens and attends to us. When a friend seeks our advice, we learn that our opinions are valued (Berndt, 1982; Duck, 1983).

Recent research showed that the sense of community, emotional stability, communication, provision of help, and maintenance of self-esteem provided by friendships all serve to support and integrate our personality (Duck, 1983). A friend helps to clarify thoughts, doubts, and beliefs as well as facilitate self-knowledge in the search for identity (Tesch, 1983). This can be of particular importance with adolescents who may be disturbed by the biological changes associated with puberty (Douvan & Adelson, 1966).

## Social Status

Friendship may also bring us social status. In cross-sectional research of the function of women's friendship Candy, Troll, and Levy (1981) suggested that this aspect of friendship is particularly important for adolescents and retired women. Adolescents may use friendship to derive status and increase self-esteem in an egocentric manner. Retired women may feel loss of social status after leaving their work: They may seek to cope by seeking derived status from a friend.

## Intimacy, Mental Health, and Physical Health

Intimacy is a function of friendship found across all ages (Candy et al., 1977; Weiss & Lowenthal, 1976) and is necessary for normal development (Bowlby, 1969). During adolescence, intimacy can contribute to the attainment of social skills and the development of a sense of security.

This personal development becomes important for maintaining intimate relations in later life.(Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Erikson, 1959).

An intimate confidant or friend is important for easing major late-life adjustments such as the death of a spouse (e.g., Blau, 1961; Lowenthal & Haven, 1968). Women seem to make the adjustment to widowhood better than men do. The conclusion of some researchers is that men tend to lack an intimate relation aside from that with their spouse; therefore they do not have the depth of the intimate support system available to women (e.g., Lowenthal & Weiss, 1976).

As common-sense would lead us to believe, having a friend to confide in is important for mental health (e.g., Brown, Bhrolchain & Harris, 1975; Lowenthal & Haven, 1968). In M. Davis' (1973) words, "an individual needs a receptacle into which to spill the surplus emotional residue of private exerience that has accumulated in him" (p. 32). Those with few friends are the most debilitated by depression (a common affliction in today's society) (Dawley, 1980). Halmos (1951), Jaco (1954), and Kohn & Calusen (1955) reported that severe mental disorders, especially schizophrenia, are associated with social isolation (cited in Linn & McGranahan, 1980). Block (1980) reported similar findings in a discussion of Jourard's work: low self-disclosure in males is identified as a factor in depression, anxiety, loneliness, marital strife and the high incidence of suicide among men. Duck (1983) pointed out that friendship problems are often associated with alcoholism and violence.

The role friendship plays in improved mental health may serve as a substitute for therapy (Schofield, 1964). Persons facing disruptions in their lives are less disposed to use professional counselling services if they have contact with a close friend (Linn & McGranahan, 1980). The value of a friendship is that it may make a more pervasive and continuous contribution to psychological health than therapy. A best friendship will provide more therapeutic value than a slight friendship (Davidson, & Packard, 1981).

Friendship may also affect our physical health. Bloom et al. (1978) and Lynch (1977) showed that those not adept at making friends have been shown to have worse teeth, and to be more prone to tonsilitis and cancer (cited in Duck, 1983). The same researchers indicated that lonely people die younger, and that bereaved spouses die sooner after the death of their partner than statistical evidence on life expectancy would predict.

### Sharing

Friendship can also provide an opportunity for sharing. Undertaking activities with others often makes these more enjoyable. As Aristotle said, "Every man wishes to share with his friends that occupation, whatever it may be which forms for him the essence and aim of his existence. So we find friends who drink together, others who dine together, while yet others go in together for physical training, hunting or philosophy" (cited in M. Davis, 1973, p. 34).

## Synoptic Overview of the Function of Friendship

Friendship can aid in the healthy psychological development of the person. Self-esteem can be bolstered by a friendship; self-concept and personality can be shaped and integrated. These relationships can be of particular importance for adolescents who are going through pubertal changes.

Social status is an important friendship function for adolescents and retired women. Intimacy is important in friendship across all ages. It is postulated that women adjust better to widowhood than males do as they have a more intimate support system. Talking to an intimate friend is therapeutic. A closer friendship may provide more therapeutic value than a less intimate friendship. Physical health and well being has also been linked to friendship support systems.

However, it is important to remember that much of the research on the importance of friendship is correlational, not causal. For example, consider a correlation between friendship and high self-esteem. The correlation could be due to the positive effect of friendship on self-esteem;

or, it could be that a person with higher self-esteem is more desirable as a friend.

Furthermore, as Candy et al. (1981) elucidated, many of the studies on the functions of friendship were limited in that they studied only one age group or measured only one function at a time. These researchers tried to overcome this problem by studying several functions of friendship in six age groups of women. The possible weakness in their cross-sectional design is that differences in friendship functions across the ages could be due to cohort rather than developmental differences.

## Friendship Classifications

In the previous two sections we have viewed friendship according to definitions, structures, and function. Most of this research focused on friendship at a generic level. It is much more common to see specific classifications of friendship (e.g., intimate, adolescent) identified for research purposes. Researchers have explored many different groups of people in their attempts to understand friendship and have classified friendships according to: miscellaneous classifications, intensity, and quality.

### Miscellaneous Classifications

One way friendship has been viewed is in accordance to developmental life stages. For example, Tesch (1983) differentiated between children's friendship, adolescent friendship, and adult friendship. We can find research on both same sex (e.g., Aries & Johnson, 1983) and cross-sex friendship (e.g., Booth & Hess, 1974). Social class is another factor which is often thought to influence friendship (e.g., Komarovsky, 1967). Non-married, romantic, and convential are other, though certainly not exhaustive, groupings from which researchers have begun their explorations of friendship.

## Classification by Intensity

Researchers have also differentiated friendship according to intensity. For example, K. E. Davis (1984) distinguished between casual and best friendships. Similarly, Davidson and Packard (1981) differentiated slight from best friendships.

Perhaps the most common distinction of friendship is based on intimacy in relations. Intimacy has been defined in several ways. As Berndt (1982) pointed out, the concept of intimacy is sometimes used to refer to "any and all features of a relationship that make it seem close or intense" (p. 1448). In this way, some researchers, such as Ramey (1975), used the term to apply to sexual intimacy in otherwise traditional friendships. Other researchers, such as Lewis (1978), have used an emotional, non-sexual orientation. They have defined intimacy as mutual self-disclosure and other kinds of verbal sharing (such as declarations of liking or loving the other), and as demonstrations of affection (such as hugging and nongenital caressing).

These varied definitions of intimacy exemplify the complexity involved in distinguishing friends from lovers. Perhaps these differences are not as distinct as some researchers indicate: Classifications may be more a result of our need to categorize than a result of pure experiential differences.

The most narrow and specific sense with which intimacy is most often used in research is in terms of self-disclosure in a process of verbal social exchange. Self-disclosure was first defined by Jourard and Lasakow (1958) as being "the process by which an individual makes himself known to another person" (cited in Goodstein & Russell, 1977, p. 365) Jourard and Laskow (1958) and Jourard (1959) reported that the more people like each other, the more they will disclose about themselves (cited in Walker & Wright, 1976).

### Classification by Quality

Intimacy is not the only factor which makes friendships qualitatively different. For example, Block (1980) presented a categorization which indicated degrees of friendship by function. These classifications follow:

1. Convenience friends. These friendships are utilitarian and are based upon exchange of favors.

2. Doing-things friends. Here, the basis of friendship is a mutual interest in, and sharing of, activities.

3. Milestone friends. These people were important to us in the past. They are friends in memory and are those with whom we can talk about old times.

4. Mentor friends. We look up to these people. They are friends who have been where we are and help us to make sense of it.

5. Part-of-a-couple friendships. These are friends in pairs; we usually don't see them alone.

6. Good friends. These are individuals that we are closest to; they are there when we need them. We see these friends often and share with them much of our private lives. The joyousness we celebrate with them adds life to our sometimes bleak world.

We see that Block's conceptualization includes intimacy as a component of high quality friendships.

## Synoptic Overview of Friendship Classifications

Researchers in the area of friendship have often focused on specific groups of people. Some of the more common distinctions in the literature have been made according to developmental stage, sex, and socioeconomic status. Friendship has also been looked at according to intensity. The most common differentiating factor has been that of intimacy. This term has sometimes been used to refer to any features of the relationship that make it a close one. This perspective includes both sexual and non-sexual intimacy. The most common way of defining intimate friendship has been by the amount of mutual self-disclosure. Friendship has also been classified according to types in a hierarchical manner which indicated a range from convenience friends to good friends.

## Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Friendships

As was mentioned in the previous section, friendship research has often centred around sex differences. This is an important area: In both research and in our lives, sex differences (or the lack of differences) have become a focal concern. Thus, it seems appropriate to review this literature in a separate section.

### Male Friendships

For the most part we seem to choose others of the same sex to be our friends. Males prefer the company of males in friendships, and emphasize the pleasure they find in other men's company; doing things together defines close friendship between men (Bell, 1981). In a friendship men value the following: similarity in interests, responsiveness in crisis, and mental stimulation (Block, 1980). Difficulties in a male friendship commonly include distrust and betrayal. Leadership and rivalry dimensions of a male friendship are often emphasized (Mahoney & Heretick, 1979). Men may shy away from intimacy and anticipate the judgement of other men (Block, 1980). The above findings agree with the structural components previously reviewed. These showed commonality to be an important factor in men's friendships.

It has been postulated that the kind of sharing that takes place between men is influenced by sex role socialization (Dawley, 1978, cited in Aries & Johnson, 1983; Derlega & Chaigin, 1975). Bell (1981) indicated that men often interact with each other in terms of social roles. Oxley (1974) explained, "The well integrated man plays bowls with one group, goes fishing with another, drinks regularly with another and so on. He is not likely to have a small circle of special friends with whom he does everything. The small circle of all-purpose friends is more likely to be found among women" (cited in Bell, 1981, pp. 404-405). Block (1980) suggested that men express more comfort in groups because the crowd diffuses the intensity of feelings that would be felt if two men met just to talk. When men meet in groups of friends, there may be less opportunity to develop intimate relations.

Derlega and Chaigin (1975) suggested that early socialization of sex roles influences males. Boys are rewarded for mastery of games and sports, and for being brave - "big boys don't cry." This hiding of feelings creates barriers to effective communication in later relationships. Lack of adequate role models, aversion to vulnerability and openness, homophobia, and pressures to compete may be other barriers to emotional intimacy (Bell, 1981). However, Powers and Bultena (1976) reported that by later life (their subjects were 70 years or older), there was little difference in characteristics of intimacy by sex, although a smaller proportion of male than female friendships were intimate. It also seems that a gradual shift is taking place, and that male roles are becoming more diffuse (Block, 1980). Shared parenting, and roles redefined by the women's movement may allow males to be less competitive and encourage more sharing of feelings.

## Female Friendships

Just as males prefer the company of other males, females usually prefer other females for friends. Women consider other women to be more self-revealing and likely to offer support and acceptance (Bell, 1981; Block, 1980; Peretti, 1980). Women's friendships usually have more of an emotional basis than do men's (Bell, 1981; Mahoney & Heretick, 1979). Block's research (1980) showed emotional openness and honesty, caring, and mental stimulation to be valuable in women's friendships. Women are willing to learn from others and extend themselves: thus, differences in such things as interests, activity preferences, thoughts, and feelings are acceptable. The emotional openness of women may be a function of sex roles learned at an earlier age. While boys are expected to hide their feelings, girls are allowed, and even encouraged to express their emotions (Derlega & Chaigin, 1975). In contrast to male friendships, which consist more of group activities, females are more likely to have a higher percentage of intimate friends whom they see on an individual basis. This may encourage female friends to share more feelings and personal confidences (Dawley, 1978, cited in Aries & Johnson, 1983).

## Cross-Sex Friendships

While most women and men seem to prefer friends of their own sex, some prefer the company of the opposite sex. Men reported more cross-sex friendships than women (Booth & Hess, 1974). Block (1980) reported that, given the choice, a man is twice as likely to prefer a woman as a confidant with whom to discuss his feelings, doubts, and fears. Men may prefer a heterosocial friendship because they feel the relationship to be less competitive and less anxiety producing than a friendship with another male (Peretti, 1980).

Despite these preferences, cross-sex friendships are relatively rare. Close opposite-sex friendships were reported by only 18% of the population that Block (1980) studied. This rate was even lower for those who were married. Booth and Hess (1974) reported cross-sex friendships for just a little more than a quarter of their respondents who were forty-five years and older.

Booth and Hess (1974) suggested that what they termed "pre-conditions," (for example contacts between same-status co-workers), probably occur less in cross-sex than in same-sex exchanges. They further suggested that for some, such as single, divorced and widowed individuals, norms are more favorable to maintenance of cross-sex friends. Social norms are not as lenient towards married people with opposite sex friends. "Are they having an affair?" is a question that is often asked (Block, 1980). The possibility of sexual attraction when one or both friends are married often creates problems. Cross-sex friendships among married women usually come about through the husband introducing his wife to his best friend. "With any sexual content defined out of the bond, the friendship develops more expeditiously than if such matters require clarification" (Booth & Hess, 1974, p. 42). Perhaps as social changes continue to remove barriers between the sexes, more cross-sex friendships will form.

### Self-disclosure in Friendship

Amount of self-disclosure is another dimension by which both male and female friendships have been explored (e.g., Goodstein & Russell, 1977; Hacker, 1981). As was previously mentioned, self-disclosure is any information communicated verbally about oneself to another. In his review of the literature, Cozby (1973) pointed out that Jourard's Self Disclosure Questionnaire -JSDQ - (or variations thereof) is the instrument most widely used to study this phenomenon. "The initial instrument, described by Jourard and Lasakow (1958), consisted of 60 items - 10 items in each of six content areas: attitudes and opinions, tastes and interests, work (or studies), money, personality, and body. Subjects responded to each item by indicating the extent to which the information has been revealed to four target persons: Mother, father, best opposite-sex friend, and best same-sex friend. Items were scored as 0 - no disclosure to the target person, 1 - disclosure only in general terms, or 2 - full and complete disclosure about the item" (Cozby, 1973, p. 74).

Results of sex differences and self-disclosure are inconclusive. Cozby's (1973) review of the literature cited eight studies where researchers reported females to have higher self-disclosure scores than males. An equal number of studies were related where no significant sex differences were noted. Cozby further proposed that as no study has ever reported a greater amount of self-disclosure on the part of the male, this in itself might be indicative of a difference between the sexes. Jourard (1964) and Plog (1965) suggested that these conflicting findings may be due to difference in geographic area. However, Cozby noted that there is no consistent pattern which would explain the conflicting results due to geographic locale.

Despite its wide-spread use, the JSDQ does not predict actual self-disclosure with accuracy (Cozby, 1973). However, in studies that do measure actual self-disclosure, the subject is usually disclosing to an experimenter or to peers whom the subject has never previously met. The problem inherent here is that this disclosure may not be representative of information communicated in the real-life friendships of the subjects. In this area at least, traditional methods of investigation appear to have fallen short of elucidating the nature of friendship.

## Synoptic Overview of Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Friendship

In general we seem to prefer the company of our own sex for friends. There appears to be qualitative differences in friendships of the different sexes. Male friendships are often characterized by activity, while female friendships usually have more of an emotional, intimate basis. Males tend to spend much of their time with groups of friends while females are more likely to see their friends on an individual basis. It has been postulated that this, and the greater social acceptability for women to show and express their emotions, may account for the more intimate nature of female friendships.

Cross-sex friendship was also reviewed. A relatively small proportion of the population have this kind of friendship. More males have a cross-sex friend than females. This may be in part because men prefer a woman over a male to discuss emotional issues. Married people are the least likely group to have an opposite sex friend, possibly because the social norms are less lenient toward this population, and because the topic of sexual relations with the friend may need clarification.

Research on sex-differences related to self-disclosure is inconclusive. Some studies show females to be more self-disclosing than males, while others indicate no difference. No studies have shown males to be more self-disclosing. The Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (or variations thereof) is the instrument most commonly used to measure this phenomena. Cozby (1973) pointed out that the JSDQ does not predict actual self-disclosure with accuracy. Alternative controlled laboratory situations where the subject actually discloses to an experimenter or to peers whom the subject has just met may not generalize to disclosure in actual life situations.

## Phenomenological Research

In the previous section natural scientific research on friendship was reviewed. Friendship was regarded in terms of functions, definitions, structures, classifications, and sex differences. The quantitative methodological researchers used a deductive approach to confirm hypotheses about a specific aspect of friendship being studied.

There are other questions to ask of friendship than those that are quantifiable. Phenomenological research addresses some of these other questions of the experience of friendship. In contrast to natural scientific research, it does not aim to confirm an hypothesis. Phenomenology is an inductive approach which begins with an orientation to the life-world of friendship - that is, "human experience as it is lived" (Polkinghorne, 1982, p. 201). For the reader unfamiliar with the phenomenological method, a description is presented in Chapter 3.

From the phenomenological perspective, Becker (1973, 1984) and Sadler (1970) emphasized the experience of friendship as a form of love which exists between two people. Through this bond friends "discover and realize both their oneness and their freedom....In true love, as in a duet, there is a harmony. Harmony does not destroy the sound of one line of music but enhances it" (Sadler, 1970, p. 184). The phenomenological perspective of friendship (which attempts to get at its essence), shares a commonality with the etymological meaning of friendship. Friendship originated as a verb form meaning "to love" in ancient Tutonic tribal languages (Block, 1980, p. 13).

Those using a phenomenological research method (Sadler, 1970; Becker,1973, 1984) elucidated several elements which they felt to be essential to "true" and "important" friendships. Becker (1973) arrived at the following structural definition of friendship:

> "Friendship is seen as a loving relationship between two subjects which takes place within the context of their experientially shared world. It is an evolving, nonexclusive dialogue of relative mutuality in essential, interrelated constituents of care, sharing, commitment, freedom, respect, trust, and equality which calls each friend to be more fully present to herself, the other and the world. Embodying this fundamental structure, each specific friendship is created in the intermingling of the participant's individual styles of being-in-the-world which consist of their past, present and future intentionalities. Fundamental world structures of time and space mold are molded by the friendship" (p. 1379-B).

Sadler (1970) considered the experience of friendship as a form of love. He discussed friendship according to the elements of (1) joy, (2) communion, (3) freedom, (4) truth, and (5) sacrifice.

It can be see that the basic structures presented by Sadler (1970) and Becker (1973, 1984) are similar. As the importance of phenomenological research lies not in its capacity to define friendship but in its ability to draw the reader into an understanding of the experience of friendship, I will expand on the basic structures identified. For discussion purposes I have synthesized the themes of Sadler (1970) and Becker (1973, 1984). These are presented below.

1. Friendship as a joyful loving relationship. When friends come together after being apart for a time there is a special kind of happiness and gladness which is manifested in animated interactions. Friends laugh easily and engage in playful banter. Friends show increasing concern and care for each other as the unique beings that they are. This caring for each other is valued over projects or activities.

2. A creation of communion lived out between friends. An intimate world is created between friends through sharing meaningful and important activities. Together, friends build a common life; they share in each other's sufferings as well as moments of triumph and elation. Intimate conversations allow for genuineness between friends. As good friends have an understanding of one another they can talk frankly and openly in an expression of their deepest convictions.

3. Freedom. Friendship is not possession and friends are not echoes of each other. A recognition of the separateness of friends is important; love enhances the individuality of the person. "Encouraged by friendship persons will tend to exercise their freedom in the direction of personal development, expanding their horizons and actualizing latent potentialities" (Sadler, 1970, p.

203). A good friend expresses faith in us. This provides us with a feeling of worthwhileness and trust, freeing us to develop our uniqueness.

4. Truth. True friends speak honestly with each other. They give authentic feedback which may be reassuring (as when friends let us know they understand us) or severe (as when friends tell us what we've done is wrong). Friends can act as a second conscience by giving us another criterion to consider. This assists us in developing our sense of identity: We become aware of the person we are and the person we might become. Friends encourage each other to be true to themselves, each other, and to social responsibilities.

5. Sacrifice. There are parts of friendship which may not be attractive. When a friend is in need we may be required to give up our interests, plans and activities, at least momentarily. This requires suffering and sacrifice in order to affirm the other person.

6. Interrelated Parts of Friendship. Important friendships can be viewed as having essential and interrelated parts: caring, sharing, commitment, freedom, respect, trust, and equality (Becker, 1984).

Becker (1973, 1984) and Sadler (1970) saw "important" or "true" friendship as a complex relation to which all the above structures are crucial. These basic elements are filled out by the uniqueness of the individual personalities involved. The degree to which relations contain these components will vary; no attempt has been made to suggest the proportions these structures should take in some ideal type of friendship. Sadler (1970) has expressed the hope that through familiarity with these structures we may now distinguish our "true friendships" from "other types of relationships which may pass as substitutes in our modern culture" (p. 209).

Becker (1973, 1984) and Sadler (1970) also addressed the differences between friendship and love relationships. Sadler (1970) saw friendship as being different from a love relationship in that lovers wish to commune in private, while friends are willing to share their joy with others and enlarge their circle of friends. He felt that while sexual intercourse is generally regarded as the consummation of romantic love, heart to heart conversation is the consummation of friendship. Regarding truth, Sadler felt that in romance, lovers speak of what is best for themselves and their union; in friendship, the truth moves the individuals out into society, pointing towards that good which they must do (1970).

Similarly, Becker suggested that differences between important friendships and sexual love relations are evident along dimensions of sexual sharing and the exclusivity of commitment (1973). However, Becker further suggested that, at least for women, important friendship and sexual love relations are structurally similar and offer comparable depths of intimacy that are valued equally (1984).

## Synoptic Overview of Phenomenological Research

While natural scientific research tends to examine only one or a few variables of friendship at a time, phenomenological research looks at the experience of friendship in a holistic way. Phenomenology's focus is on the essential nature of friendship. It uses an inductive approach which begins its research with the lived-experience of friendship. This is in contrast to the deductive approach used in quantitative research.

Becker (1973, 1984) and Sadler (1970) saw "important" and "true" friendship as a complex relation. They identified structures that they saw to be essential to friendship. A synthesis of these are: (1) friendship as a joyful, loving relationship, (2) a creation of communion lived out between friends, (3) freedom, (4) truth, (5) sacrifice, and (6) the interrelated parts of friendship. These essential components vary in each friendship in accordance with the uniqueness of the individuals involved. Both authors addressed the differences between friendship and a sexual love relationship.

## Methodological Choice

The natural scientific research served to orient me to the notion of friendship and expand my previous conceptions. I learned specific information about friendship, such as its relation to physical and mental health. However, simplifying the concept of friendship for ease of study overlooks the complexity of the experience of friendship. We may end up with a series of interesting but fragmented variables which provide little meaning. A painting is more than individual brush strokes: Friendship seems to be different from the sum of its parts.

Many of the results on friendship were inconclusive and even contradictory. When this happened little information about friendship was gained. I felt even more removed from a unified view. The nature of friendship may be such that any reductionistic tool will necessarily produce inconclusive results.

Further, researcher's presuppositions and research design may cloud the actual experience of friendship. For example, behavioral definitions may put some friendships, or aspects of friendship, outside the realm of study. Use of pre-set categories in analyzing open-ended questionnaires may not accomodate the subject's intended meaning.

In contrast to the quantitative method, the phenomenological approach viewed the notion of friendship in a more holistic way. The phenomenological research provided more information toward my interest in the essential nature of the experience of friendship. This paradigm is better suited to answer my research questions than the natural scientific paradigm.

However, in reading the phenomenological research I was somewhat troubled. In striving to identify the essence of true and important friendship, Becker (1973, 1984) and Sadler (1970) presented what could be considered a limited view of most people's actual friendships. I know that as well as having loving and joyous moments in my friendships, I have times of disillusionment and pain. This aspect of friendship was little considered in the phenomenological research. I also think that friendship is a process with a beginning and sometimes an end. While Sadler commented briefly that friendships usually do not last forever, this conception was not covered in any depth. In asking: What is the nature of the experience of friendship? I wish to explore the full range of possibilities. It is in this way that my research will expand upon previous phenomenological research on friendship.

## CHAPTER 3

## METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter I will review the research implications of both the quantitative methodology of natural science and the qualitative methodology of phenomenology. However, it is important to remember that in actual practice, the differences between the quantitative and qualitative methodologies are not as distinct as the different labels imply. As Miles and Huberman (1984) informed us, "If one looks carefully at the research actually conducted in the name of one or another epistemology, it seems that few working researchers are not blending the two perspectives" (p. 20).

### The Natural Scientific Research Method

The philosophical foundation of the natural scientific method arose from such philosophers as Bacon (1561-1621) and Locke (1632-1704) (Rychlak, 1981). Bacon was a philosopher of the British Empiricism school who was in disagreement with what he saw to be anthropomorphizing by the Aristotelians: i.e., he saw them to be assigning a purpose to nature. An example of anthropomorphism would be to say, "This meal disagreed with me." But, as the meal is not human it cannot disagree. From Bacon forward this type of reasoning has been considered a poor explanation in science. In contrast, the Empirical School emphasized that "knowledge must be based on observable things and events" (Rychlak, p. 11).

Locke was another philosopher of the British Empiricism school who influenced academic psychology. Locke proposed that we are a blank slate (tabula rosa) at birth. External experience alone (that which exists independent of mind) will imprint upon the blank slate and be what is known to us. The source of meaning arises from the reality of the world as separate from us. Reality imposes itself upon us through our senses (Rychlak, 1981). This orientation is termed "realism."

> "The realists have always rejected innate ideas and maintained that all knowledge arises from the experience of reality. 'Reality,' however, for the realist, is the brute reality of an inhuman world, divorced from the subject....Man faces this world as pure passivity....The world is purely a spectacle for consciousness; as a 'detached spectator,' the knower considers the world without having a standpoint in it" (Luijpen & Koren, 1969, p. 58).

In realism there is a gap between consciousness and the world.

Thus, the basic assumption of science is that there is a knowable world that exists apart from the individual human mind (Van Dalen, 1973). Natural scientific research attempts to orient to the phenomenon being studied in an objective way; the phenomenon being studied must be observable, measurable, and duplicable. Operational definitions are used in an attempt to eliminate subjective opinions and value judgements. The clarity provided by these definitions allows other researchers to carry out the same experiment in a similar way.

This objective approach allows for experimental control. However, in the study of humans it is limiting in that is does not allow for an examination of the subjective experience. In answering their question, "What is there to know about people?", Valle and King (1978) proposed that there are two sides to our being: the objective side which is outwardly observable and the subjective side of experience which is inward and unobservable. In order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of people, it is important to know more about them than that which can be observed objectively. For example, an individual who appears calm to an observer may be experiencing inner turmoi. Humans cannot be understood without their individual purposes being taken into account.

Gibbs (1979) cautioned against using either a subjective or objective approach. With an objective approach, precision is gained at the expense of losing a sense of the authentic human in his real environment; in a subjective approach, authenticity is gained at the expense of certainty. Gibbs proposed the need for an ecologically oriented approach which would transcend the errors of objective and subjective research through a blend of both inductive and deductive features (for a critical review of objectivism and subjectivism the reader is referred to Gibbs).

In accordance with the natural scientific paradigm's aim of objectivity, quantitative research is often done under controlled conditions (such as laboratory settings) in an attempt to limit the infuence of extraneous variables on the research results. However, one cannot be certain that these findings can be generalized outside of the laboratory situations (Kerlinger, 1973). Gibbs (1979) suggested that the limited scope of what may be studied in laboratory situations may lead to trivial investigation.

Quantitative research tends to use a reductionistic approach; specific variables for study are isolated and identified. In this deductive approach, a hypothesis is formulated, then rigorously tested for significance (Stainback & Stainback, 1984). There is often a cause-effect prediction made between two variables. Valle, King and Citrenbaum (1978) suggested that this deterministic model is too simplistic; in attempting to focus upon objective reality and behavior we misunderstand people and their complexities. Rychlak (1976) indicated that this reduces the study of humans to the study of an alleged mechanistic behavior.

The natural scientific methodology is based upon the premise of objectivity. Yet, Bixenstine (1976) challenged this very notion of objectivity as being highly debatable, believing that objectivity is in fact a value; that we cannot help but evaluate the world through all our perceptual experiences. Bixenstine proposed that even "pure" science involves a value of types in determining what is important to study.

Natural scientific researchers may use standardized research instruments (e.g., questionnaires, tests) for data collection. Reliability is of concern: that is, results need to be replicable. These measures guard against a selective bias that would support a hypothesis (Kerlinger, 1973). However, Gibbs (1979) would question the purported objectivity of the scientific method here. He cited McGuire (1973) to emphasize his conception that continued redesign of the experimental method may eventually allow the researcher to show his hypothesis as correct.

> If the experiment does not turn out "right", then the researcher does not say that the hypothesis is wrong but rather that something was wrong with the experiment, and he corrects and revises it, perhaps by using more appropriate subjects, by strengthening the independent variable manipulation, by blocking off extraneous response possibilities, or by setting up a more appropriate context, etc....But note that what the experiment tests is not whether the hypothesis is true but rather whether the experimenter is a sufficiently

> ingenious stage manager to produce in the laboratory conditions which demonstrate that an obviously true hypothesis is correct (p. 449).

The ubiquitous natural scientific research paradigm has made many contributions to the field of friendship, as evidenced in the literature review. However, its search for prediction and control creates limitations which necessarily ignore an important part of the human phenomenon of friendship. As Kuhn (1970) indicated, no paradigm is without limitations.

In choosing a research methodology, it is important to determine which approach is most suited to answer the research question. As my interest is a description of people's lived-experiences of friendship, the natural scientific paradigm with its objective orientation is not appropriate. What is needed is a complementary paradigm to offset the restraints of the quantitative method. The qualitative method of phenomenology complements the natural scientific approach (each method allows an understanding of a part of the gestalt of friendship). I will use the phenomenological approach for an exploration of my research questions. The assumptions of this methodology are explored in the following section.

# The Phenomenological Research Method

## Phenomenology in Relation to the Overall Perspective of Human Science Research

The term phenomenology is one which is used in a variety of ways in todays research. Though it has a specific origin, the meaning of phenomenological research has been expanded to include almost anything that is studied from the subjective point of view. The term is often used as being equivalent to qualitative methodology, including participant observer, in-depth interviewing, grounded theory, field work, and symbolic interactionism (Polkinghorne, 1982).

Kockelman (1973) identified three main research possibilities in the human sciences: empirical, decriptive, and hermeneutic (cited in Polkinghorne, 1982). He ascribed the phenomenological method to the descriptive approach. A summary of these methods follows:

1. The Empirical Approach. The empirical approach is a deductive system of inquiry. It produces knowledge which is theoretical, formal, functional and quantitative. An abstraction of the human realm in respect to formal properties is required. This necessarily implies that an important part of the meaning of human phenomena is left unexplored.

2. The Descriptive Approach. The focus here is on describing the basic structure of lived-experience (the

organizing principles that give form and meaning to the life-world). Phenomenological sociology, ethnomethodology, phenomenological psychology, and existential-phenomenology are included in this category. Phenomenology traces its roots to Husserl.

3. The Hermeneutic Approach. This approach had its origins in the interpretation of classical and religious texts. In more recent times this approach has become important for questions surrounding the nature of human understanding, the meaning of interpretation, and the role of interpretation in life-world investigation.

> Hermeneutics is the science of correct Understanding or interpretation. It provides an exposition of rules to guide successful Understanding so that the interpretive effort is more efficient and so that the validity of its results is safeguarded from the intrusion of arbitrariness and subjective misunderstanding. Hermeneutics is a method of systematization of formal procedures which is designed to assist researchers in the task of Understanding and attaining a goal of correct interpretation (Polkinghorne, 1982, p. 21).

While Kockelman (1973) categorized phenomenology as a descriptive rather than an empirical approach (as did Husserl (Lubbe, 1978)), this categorization is not a concensus of other people engaged in phenomenological research. For example, Giorgi (1970), known for his development and use of the phenomenological method in the psychological field, considered the phenomenological method to be an empirical one. Phenomenological researchers can be seen to be striving for a radical empiricism which considers human experience of the life-world as the valid foundation for scientific inquiry (McConville, 1978). From this perspective, natural science in the area of human research can be seen to have adopted a false deductive empiricism.

> "While it [natural-scientific research] accepts the fundamental importance of experience, it assumes (with the exception of Gibson) that the originary form of experience is the elementary sensation. This assumption itself, however, is not backed up by experience; instead it is accepted on the basis of logical deductions from the postulates of physics and physiology" (McConville, 1978, p. 157).

There are diverse interpretations as to where and how the phenomenological method fits into the overall research picture of the human sciences, or, in general usage, even as to what it is. That so many researchers are incorporating the foundations of phenomenology into their experimental research recommends the method. However, there is an origin to this methodology and a movement with basic characteristics which developed from it. It is this "purer" form of phenomenology that will be discussed in the following sections.

## Origin of Phenomenology

To understand the origin of phenomenology it is important to consider the philosophical foundations upon which it was built. As we saw previously, the "realists," such as Bacon and Locke, believed that we know of the world through our senses independently of our mind. Other philosophers have emphasized knowing through-consciousness; these people have been called "idealists." For an idealist, "meanings in life are framed (created, brought about) by the intelligence of living organisms with the greatest knowledge possible occurring in the conceptions of human reason" (Rychak, 1981, p.14).

Kant (1724-1804) is an example of one philosopher who emphasized the mind in the creation of meaning. He believed that all that we know of the world is first ordered by the structure of senses according to space and time, then by mental categories. Kant believed there to be a "reality of things in existence" which is termed noumena. However, although reason tells us of the existence of this reality we can never know directly what this existence is. It is only through our indirect experience (termed phenomena) that we can know of the world.

A similar orientation to knowing was apparent in the works of the philosopher Husserl, who developed the phenomenological method in the early nineteen hundreds in order to learn of the "invariant structures of consciousness." Instead of studying consciousness as a theoretical concept, he focused on consciousness as it is experientially given. Husserl maintained that "experience is--not a buzzing flux but a meaningful and ordered understanding" (Polkinghorne, 1982, p. 204). Thus, for Husserl, experience is built up through an activity of constitution. In contrast to the atomistic approach of realism which would piece together the sensa, the constitutive process of Husserl's organizes experience in a holistic way:

> Experience is not at all a matter of a thing called 'consciousness' automatically reacting to 'stimuli' whose ultimate cause is supposed to be a given physical reality unequivocally present 'out there.' Rather, experience is built up through an activity of constitution along the lines of types (eide) or 'essential structures' (Polkinghorne, 1982, p. 204).

Phenomenology continued to evolve from its idealistic origins with Husserl. Husserl had investigated consciousness in its pure form; he distingished consciousness from empirical facts. After Husserl, phenomenology was influenced by "existential" thinkers. The term is in quotations because it is ill-defined; many of those labeled existentialists do not consider themselves as such (e.g., Heidegger, Jaspers) (Kaufmann, 1975). Existentialism is not a school of philosophical thought; it is more a reaction against traditional schools of thought. Existentialism can be viewed as an approach which attempts to understand the underlying situations of basic human existence. "Existentialism is the endeavor to understand man by cutting below the cleavage between subject and object...on a level which undercuts the old dilemma of materialism versus idealism (May, 1958, p. 11).

A main contributor to what has been called existential-phenomenology (a blend of these two disciplines) (Luijpen & Koren, 1969) was made by Heidegger who proposed that consciousness was a function of lived human experience, and as such, was not separate from the world. This was a shift from the idealist realm in that the emphasis was now on being-in-the-world rather than on pure consciousness. Heidegger's additions to Husserl were further extended by Merleau-Ponty with the addition of two existential structures of space-time and embodiment (Polkinghorne, 1982). The conceptions of being-in-the-world and organizing the life-structure according to space-time and embodiment incorporate both the world and the consciousness of the knower in making experience meaningful. Thus, phenomenology as evolved from Husserl serves to bridge the gap between "realism" and "idealism" as they have been presented.

The sociological field has been influenced by Schutz (1932) who brought a version of Husserl's phenomenology to bear on sociological problems in his major work The Phenomenology of the Social World (Polkinghorne, 1982). In the psychological field, Giorgi (1970) developed methods for describing psychological meanings of human structures. Rogers, Kelly, and Maslow are other people in the field of psychology who have been influenced by phenomenology (Osborne, 1985).

## Characteristics of Phenomenology

Phenomenology focuses its attention on what is given in human experience. It is the study of the life-world; the world as we immediately experience it. It is a matter of describing and does not offer an avenue by which to theorize or categorize the world. What it does offer is the possibility of insight, which brings us (as Husserl proposed) to a return to the "things themselves" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Phenomenology seeks to develop presuppositionless structural descriptions that make a thing what it is, distinct from something else (van Manen, 1984).

Phenomenology is rooted in the basic assumption that people are not just objects in nature. In phenomenology there is a recognition of the binding relationship between the individual and his world; the person does not exist separately from the world and the world does not exist apart from the person. It is a realization of a co-constitutional relationship; we are in, rather than of, the world. This is perhaps the most critical distinction between phenomenology and the natural scientific paradigm (Valle and King, 1978).

Thus, to talk about friendship apart from a friend is meaningless. It is from our actual lived-experiences with our friends in the world that our meaning of friendship is derived. There is a dialogal relationship present where both the world and the person are partly active (e.g., the person acts upon a friend in a purposeful way), partly passive (e.g., the friend also acts upon the person) (Valle & King, 1978). The two are inseparably intertwined.

The recognition of the interdependency between people and the world has led some psychologists to a holistic orientation. For example, "Rogers emphasizes the holistic nature of learning, including feelings and intellect, as well as the meta-level perspective of learning about learning" (Osborne, 1985).

In acknowledging the subjective aspect of the person, phenomenology is interested in understanding the meaning that people give to their lived-experiences. Researchers in this paradigm will typically talk with people, as natural language is the way that people most often express their experiences (Stainback & Stainback, 1984). The thoughts and feelings of people become important.

In contrast to the natural scientific method, phenomenology uses an inductive approach. Rather than begin with a hypothesis, phenomenologists attempt to suspend or put into abeyance their hypotheses and presuppositions. This is referred to as bracketing and reduction and is done by adopting what Husserl referred to as a 'transcendental attitude' (Colaizzi, 1978; Polkinghorne, 1980). In this process phenomenologists identify their assumptions in relation to whatever phenomena they are investigating. Once they are clear as to what these presuppositions are, more emerge. Again these are identified and bracketed in a continual process. Each time researchers come closer to the purely phenomenal realm. Thus, phenomenology aims to look at naive experiences and understand phenomenon in their perceived immediacy with no concern to explain, predict, or control.

This lack of concern leaves a gap in the power of phenomenology, a gap filled by the natural scientific paradigm. Incomplete bracketing may be seen as a possible weakness in that researcher bias may influence the results. Other than Husserl, few believe that a pure suppositionless point can be achieved (Polkinghorne, 1980).

With less concern for verification, and more of an orientation toward understanding, the phenomenological researcher is free to change or add to his sources of data collection as the study progresses (Stainback & Stainback, 1984). With the intent of furthering understanding and a recognition of co-constitutionality, phenomenology approaches research in a holistic manner. An attempt is made to understand the totality and complexities of the phenomenon under investigation in the context of the natural environment.

In furthering the notion of co-constitutionality and being-in-the-world, some existential-phenomenologists have traditionally divided the world into three categories: the Umwelt, the Mitwelt and the Eigenwelt (e.g, Keen, 1978; May, 1958). The Umwelt is the biological world; it is being a body in space; it refers to how the physical body defines how we are in our environment. The Mitwelt is our interrelation with other humans. It is our social aspect that confirms our being. We confirm who we are through interactions with others. "The essence of relationship is that in the encounter both persons are changed" (May 1958, p. 63). The Eigenwelt is being a self in time where we look at our lives; we look to our past, and consider our highs and lows, while always living towards a future. These are universal categories which apply to us all. These modes are always interrelated; they are three simultaneous modes of being in the world (Keen, 1978).

Another distinguishing characteristic of phenomenology is its view of the nature of consciousness. The nature of consciousness is usually overlooked in natural scientific research. If this notion is acknowledged or explored, it is usually referred to in terms of a "person's consciousness"; as an object or a static thing. Phenomenology has a somewhat different notion of consciousness (as we have seen) which is derived from Husserl. Consciousness is characterized by its intentionality or intended objects: i.e., we are always conscious of something. The object we are conscious of may be as concrete as a door or as abstract as a concept. An interrelatedness between consciousness and object is revealed. The principle of co-constitutionality applies here: There is no world for us without a consciousness to perceive it and no consciousness without the world to be conscious of.

Consciousness is concerned with the "uninterpreted world of everyday experience with the world as given in direct and immediate experiences" (Valle and King, 1978, p. 9). It is the domain of pure phenomenon, naive experience prior to any interpretation. It is referred to as the Lebenswelt or life-world; the starting point or ground; a sensing; a pre-reflective nature. We take this life-world and reflect upon it through language and verbalizations. However, it still remains that the life-world is the basis; without it there would be nothing to reflect upon. Albert Einstein (1952) described his own thinking process of pre-reflective sensing which was only later followed by language:

> The words of the language as they are written or spoken do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The physical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images...these elements are, in my case, of a visual and some of a muscualar type. Conventional words or other signs have to be sought for laboriously only in a secondary stage (cited in Valle & King, 1978, pp. 11-12).

It is this life-world that the phenomenologist wishes to explore.

## Synoptic Overview of Methodological Considerations

We have seen the implications for research of the objective natural scientific paradigm and the intersubjective phenomenological paradigm. Both have strengths and limitations. These two methods are complementary as they each provide a different perspective of the whole picture of friendship. Due to the nature of my research questions I believe the phenomenological orientation to be the most appropriate for my use.

However, as Miles and Huberman (1984) indicated, these paradigms are not as separate in practice as they are theoretically. These authors call for the use of a more ecumenical epistomology; one that combines the most desirable natures of both paradigms in whatever way most fully elucidates the phenomenon being studied. Thus, I further suggest that while I will be borrowing the basic assumptions of the phenomenological paradigm, there is no need to be rigidly constrained by this purely descriptive approach if it becomes apparent that alternate ways of analysis lend themselves to a further understanding of the experience of friendship.

# CHAPTER 4

# PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

I have been discussing phenomenological research methodology as if it exists in as clearly a defined fashion as the natural scientific method. Yet, if we fully realize the implications of Husserl's "returning to the things themselves" (cited in Merleau-Ponty, 1962) we see that there can be no such thing as "the" phenomenological method. "Each particular psychological pehnomenon [sic], in conjunction with the particular aims and objectives of a particular researcher, evokes a particular descriptive method" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 53).

This meant that there was no established methodology to follow. It was necessary to create a method suitable for best understanding the experience of friendship. To do this, I read several phenomenological research studies and examined the methods they used (e.g., Colaizzi, 1978; Osborne, 1985). From these I came to an understanding of an approach that seemed suited to my research interest.

Miles and Huberman (1984) indicated that:

> The status of conclusions from qualitative studies is uncertain because researchers don't report on their methodology, and researchers don't report on their methodology becuse there are no established conventions for doing that" (p. 22).

In order to clarify the steps taken in my research, I have integrated theoretical explanations with research methodology.

## Method

### Orienting to the Experience of Friendship

In beginning phenomenological research it is necessary to orient to the phenomenon being studied (van Manen, 1984). As was stated in the introduction, the topic of friendship has personal relevance. My orientation to friendship began when Ami, the child of a good friend, innocently asked if her mother was my best friend. Later, the death of a long-term friend heightened my thoughtfulness of this notion. I found I had many questions that I wished to explore. It was in this way that I developed an interest in researching friendship.

### Co-researchers

The six people who shared in the study (three men and three women) were graduate students in counselling psychology. Their ages ranged from early to late twenties. Four of these people had recently undergone major relationship changes and were engaged in a reflective process about the meaningfulness of present relationships. Through shared experiences in a university counselling program I had established close friendships with the co-researchers. The warm relationship that had developed between myself and these people was important as it allowed them to communicate their experience of friendship in a more honest way than if this established trust had been absent. The limited sample does not pose methodological problems as the goal of this study is not generalization but a description of the essential themes of the experience of friendship of the co-researchers. This contrasts with the natural-scientific paradigm where such a narrow population would lead to difficulty in generalizability of research findings.

## Explicating Assumptions and Pre-Understandings (Bracketing)

A theoretical conception of bracketing was presented in Chapter 3. In this section the practice of bracketing is demonstrated.

As I engaged in a process of thoughtful reflection in an attempt to crystalize a research topic, I began to see that my proposed directions for study were based on personal assumptions I held about friendship.

> The problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate but that we know too much (van Manen, 1984, p. 9).

I was further reminded by reading Polkinghorne (1980) that the aim of phenomenology is "to allow the modes and objects of consciousness to be seen as they are in their original appearance" (p. 7). I began to see the importance of freeing myself from my biases and pre-judgements in order to prevent my research from becoming a process where I simply imposed my own views upon the phenomenon of friendship.

Initially I planned to narrow my topic of study to friendships between women. I thought these friendships were more intimate than friendships between males. In reflecting upon this I realized that I was assuming (1) that males found their friendships with other males to be unsatisfactory, and (b) that females' closest friends would be other females. In identifying this bias, I realized this to be false even in my own experience: My closest friend was a male! I also recognized that I believed intimate friends would share a degree of closeness that would allow them to confide their innermost feelings and thoughts. I began to see how I was already imposing my own structures upon friendship and decided to explore friendship in a general, as opposed to sex-specific, way.

As I further pursued my thoughts I wondered which friends I would ask my co-researchers to talk about. Would I ask them to talk about their closest friends? Would I "allow" subjects to talk about lovers or spouses as friends or would I want people to talk only about platonic friendships? I once again saw how I was already structuring the phenomenon from my own mind set.

Again, my bias: Friendships evolve and deepen over time; those friendships that will be the most valuable are those that are the most enduring. I considered asking people to tell me about friends they had had for a long time, possibly since childhood. I saw my assumption: Once again I told myself to open the questioning process in order to allow the experiences of the co-researchers to be as free as possible from my imposed structures.

I began to see the importance of self-awareness of my biases in order to reach a more open and less prejudiced perspective. It became clear that this process must continue throughout the duration of my research: Whatever I assumed to be true I must question, taking the opportunity to look at the phenomenon in a fresh way.

## Procedure

With my co-researchers chosen, I needed to determine a method for undertaking my research. In Colaizzi's (1978) article on psychological phenomenological research, he indicated that "the phenomenologist must initiate his inquiry by an examination of his approach in order to uncover his presuppositions about the investigated topic" (p. 58). I had already begun this process of bracketing and from this I developed the following research query: "Tell of friendship that you have now or have had - perhaps the meeting, the development, important moments."

In an attempt to lessen my biases, I left the question as open as possible: that is, I did not specify male or female friend, past or present friend, close or casual friend, sexual or non-sexual friend. I began my research with an interview with Keri. I opened the interview with the research question presented above. The interview was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. From this interview I learned the importance of encouraging the co-researchers to give me a lived-experience description of a particular friendship as much as possible, rather than an analysis of friendship.

The next person I interviewed was Austin. I began with the same research question, but this time, in order to get at the lived-experience, I added the request to tell about the friendship in story form. Again the interview was transcribed verbatim.

After reading the transcripts from these two interviews I decided to make methodological changes. (Despite alterations in subsequent investigations with co-researchers, data from the initial interviews was maintained as it provided rich descriptive information of the experience of friendship). The changes were as follows:

1. Friendship is an expansive experience that pervades much of our lives. I found the interviews covered so much ground that many of the more essential features of friendship were perhaps obscured in the tangential sidetracks the conversations took. Thus, subsequent

co-researchers were asked to give a written, rather than verbal description of their friendships.

2. The research questions were revised. I had found that each interview yielded rich descriptions important to friendships. For example, after interviewing Keri I realized that descriptions of those we choose not to be friends with may illuminate the understanding of friendship. This idea was incorporated into the research questions.

In the revised procedures, the remaining co-researchers were given a sheet with the following instructions designed to elicit a description of the experience of friendship:

> Write an answer to the following questions, using story form where possible. Relate anecdotes or incidents which high-light your experiences.
>
> 1. Tell of a friendship that you have now or have had - perhaps the meeting, development, important moments.
> 2. Tell of a friendship of the opposite sex from the one you have just described. For example, if in question number 1 you described a female friend, for this question describe a male friend.
> 3. Has there been a time when you felt like you didn't have a friend in the world? If so, describe this experience.

4. Is there a person you have consciously chosen NOT to be friends with?

5. Is there anything you wish to add which you feel would further illuminate the concept of friendship?

After reading the protocols, I contacted each co-researcher where necessary to have them clarify what they had written. For example, Franklin had written that his friend met some of his needs. I asked him to tell me more about this. His explanation was then incorporated into the research data.

# CHAPTER 5

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The procedural steps in the data analysis were as follows: (1) initial reading, (2) conducting thematic analysis, (3) first-order clustering of themes: arranging data in tabular form, (4) second-order clustering of themes: synthesizing the data, and (5) constructing an integrative analysis of the experience of friendship. These steps are amplified below.

## Initial Reading

The protocols were read several times in order to get a "feel" for the themes which seemed essential in revealing the experience of friendship. The original protocols are not reproduced here. Rather, co-researchers' descriptions are included in condensed form in the following sections.

## Conducting Thematic Analysis

A line-by-line approach was then used to identify emerging themes (for an elaborated description of this process, see van Manen, 1984). Each sentence in each protocol was scrutinized to see what it revealed about the experience of friendship. I looked at what the co-researcher was saying, then extracted the underlying meaning using a thematic word or phrase. For example, for the statement: "We are inseparable and do everything together" I used the thematic phrase of a "shared world."

For the statement: "Because of Mike's appearance (he had very long hair and seemed somewhat aloof), I made little effort to get to know him" the thematic phrase "first impressions" was used.

There was a danger of misinterpretation at this stage because a leap was being made from what the co-researchers had said to what they meant. In order to lessen the possibility of misinterpretation, each co-researcher was given a copy of their protocol with the essential themes which I had extracted. Each was asked to comment on the accuracy of the interpretation. Based on feedback from the co-researchers, minor adjustments to themes were made. For example, I had abstracted the theme of "acceptance" from Richard's phrase of "acceptance without judgement or rejection." Richard felt that the theme of "freedom" also applied to his statement; an adjustment was made to incorporate this. The main themes which were extracted were:

(A) initial meeting/first impressions, (B) beginning of friendship, (C) attraction, (D) similarities, (E) differences, (F) evolving process, (G) shared world, (H) freedom, (I) nurturance, (J) dissolution, and (K) isolation. The following sub-themes were identified for (F) evolving process: F(1) developmental process, F(2) over time and distance separation, and F(3) old friends. The following sub-themes were identified for

(G) shared world: G(1) fundamentals, G(2) caring/integrity, G(3) giving/meaning, G(4) support, G(5) acceptance G(6) understanding, and G(7) emotional tone.

## First-Order Clustering of Themes: Arranging Data in Tabular Form

The data were arranged in tabular form (see Table 2) to allow for a global perspective of the relationship of the extracted themes and the co-researchers' descriptions. This table may also allow the reader to make a decision about the appropriateness of the essential themes abstracted from the data. Significant phrases are shown for each subject; repetitious phrases were eliminated. Phrases were left in the co-researchers' words as much as possible.

### TABLE 2

### First-Order Clustering of Themes:

| | CHARLENE | RICHARD | KERI | FRANKLIN | AUSTIN | LORI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. INITIAL MEETING/FIRST IMPRESSIONS | -met at a party<br>- popular, glamorous, plenty of friends | -met at university<br>-most striking female ever seen<br>-long hair, aloof<br>-judgements limit getting to know person | -sat across from each other in class<br>-look at person: appearance, body language, expression<br>-don't want anything to do with them<br>-felt everywhere: whole body, mind, says you can't be their friend<br>-not comfortable if see people too much above or below self<br>-perception of own inadequacy determines comfort | -met in store | -beginning forgotten in long-term friendship | -met at university<br>-intuitive knowing other would become friend |
| B. BEGINNING OF FRIENDSHIP | -friendship formed later through special incident<br>-seemed beyond coincidence<br>-belief friends don't meet haphazardly | -knew long time before becoming friends<br>-got to know each other through spending time together<br>-accidental beginning<br>-invitation to join | -friendship started later with initial incident<br>-seemingly beyond coincidence<br>-element of fate may be involved<br>-definite beginning point | -gradual evolution<br>-difficulty remembering beginning of childhood friendship | -gradual evolution<br>-difficulty remembering beginning of long-term friendship | -became friends later<br>-ask other to spend time together |

# TABLE 2

## First-Order Clustering of Themes:

| | CHARLENE | RICHARD | KERI | FRANKLIN | AUSTIN | LORI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C. ATTRACTION | -she was a socialite, something I wanted very much to be<br>-attractive qualities: fun, sensitive, caring, nurturing | -sexual attraction although essence more important<br>-attractive qualities: kindness, thoughtfulness, warmth<br>-never met male like him | -pretty accepting | -attracted by obvious brightness, basic "tenderness" qualities, non-traditional beliefs, sense of spirituality<br>-qualities rare in male | -initial attraction to physical resemblance, mistaken for brothers<br>-attraction to support group | |
| D. SIMILARITIES | -enjoy similar activities: concerts, high living<br>-similar beliefs/open personalities | -strong values basis<br>-interest in intellectual pursuits<br>-common interests | -close friends are what I am<br>-alikeness in trust, respect, consideration<br>-we're so much alike | -both hold non-traditional beliefs in many areas e.g., relationships, spirituality/religion, politics<br>-common interests e.g., love of good food, wine, travelling, and art<br>-share similar life situations<br>-concern with "deeper" interests | -fair bit in common<br>-see eye to eye on basics, quality of lifestyle<br>-similar family backgrounds e.g., both essentially grew up without a father<br>-shared void<br>-similar interests; e.g., music, adventure, outdoors | -both struggling with decision whether or not to end sexual relationships<br>-feels good to share similar philosophy not too many hold<br>-enjoy similar activities: e.g., hiking, enjoying nature<br>-unique commonality: both seeing Jungian therapist |
| E. DIFFERENCES | -she was a socialite, something I wanted very much to be | -interests develop through friends e.g., developed interest in neurophysiology, have come to like cats | | -learn from different interests of friend e.g., good enough to share knowledge about computers, stock market | -ability to accept differences important<br>-differences bring vibrance<br>-appreciate balancing influence; one is a risk-taker other is conservative<br>-differences give more to talk about<br>-sought out females in drive for change | |
| F. EVOLVING PROCESS | -grows over time<br>-time spent with friend wonderful as friend so well known | -initial discomfort<br>-initial development incredibly rapid<br>-infatuation<br>-gradual detachment<br>-security realized<br>-admiration increases<br>-meet in home rather than public setting<br>-learn to just "be" with one another<br>-friendship strengthened when other is in crisis<br>-comfort in silence | -always comfortable | -time lapse until other becomes friend<br>-gradually get to know one another<br>-long series of gab sessions where topics expand to cover just about everything<br>-big changes in lives pose no problems<br>-gradual deepening of friendship<br>-closeness increases through sharing unusual experience | -strengthens through sharing life experiences: jobs, relationships, moving, family problems<br>-friendship goes through highs and lows<br>-resolving differences strengthens friendship<br>-stability develops over time | -gradually begin to find out more personal things about each other<br>-spend more time together<br>-begin to share dinner at each other's homes<br>-special incident involving honest confrontation brings friendship to more openness<br>-come to feel friendship will be long term<br>-develop comfort in physical expressiveness e.g., hugging, linking arms<br>-comfort in expressing variety of emotions |
| F(1). A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS | -in reflection, adolescent friendship seems trite, superficial<br>-friends help each other grow<br>-physical contact with others important | -appreciation from friend develops esteem | -friendships means different things at different ages<br>-learn through previous friendships: there was possession and obligation; learned we didn't have to be that way | -friend fulfills needs e.g., cultural, intellectual | | -friend fills need for physical contact<br>-hugs nourishing |
| F(2). OVER TIME/DISTANCE SEPARATION | | -survives 1000 miles apart<br>-comfort after not seeing friend for several months<br>-remains stable despite situational changes<br>-objects reminding one of friend take on special meaning in absence e.g., gifts, cards, pictures | -when see each other after long time its like never stopped seeing each other | -go for long periods without seeing each other<br>-friendship continues even when people must be apart for awhile<br>-treasure contact from friends in their absence e.g., letters | -friendship survives over long period of time<br>-understanding friendship maintained when friend moves | -come together after being apart and still feel closeness from what has been shared |

# TABLE 2

## First-Order Clustering of Themes:

| | CHARLENE | RICHARD | KERI | FRANKLIN | AUSTIN | LORI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F(3). OLD FRIENDS | -occasional contact<br>-letters, calls<br>-still share special connection<br>-initial period of unease<br>-talk easily | | | -wonderful memories | | |
| G. SHARED WORLD | -inseparable, do everything together<br>-share life experiences<br>-talk intimately<br>-physical intimacy<br>-close to his family | -pass time<br>-do nothing in particular except be together<br>-share ordinary moments<br>-enjoy the mundane, invite friend to do mundane<br>-spend hours talking about intimate and topical things | -do many things together<br>-comraderie/partnership in crime<br>-talk about everything under the sun | -shared activities e.g., running, movies, dinners<br>-long discussions | -private understandings; inside jokes<br>-go through life changes together<br>-roughhouse physical contact | -talk about many things<br>-share personal experiences<br>-share activities e.g., walking, talking, just enjoying the beauty of nature<br>-intimate physical contact e.g., hugs<br>-intimate conversations |
| G(1). FUNDAMENTALS | -very special friendship<br>-muse what friendship will be like when we're 40<br>-probably the strongest foundation two friends could have<br>-we'll always be friends<br>-friendship reflects who you are as person | -friendship unique; never met anyone like this before | -friendship is special<br>-made up of two people<br>-defined by who you are<br>-to define friendship must define self<br>-feel lucky to have friendship like that; don't know if everyone does<br>-plan on going through the life cycle together<br>-make future plans with friend | -relationship could not be shared with anyone else<br>-qualities rare to find | -specialness in friendship as it has lasted so many years<br>-belief others probably haven't the good fortune to experience such a special friendship<br>-don't see any reason for friendship not to be maintained in future | -specialness in friendship<br>-uniqueness<br>-feel friendship will be long term |
| G(2). CARING/INTEGRITY | -positive affirmations of love | -concern<br>-protectiveness<br>-happiness for friend<br>-attention to friend's interests<br>-love | -trust<br>-know things won't go anywhere | | -love naturally implies friendship<br>-kind words | -caring<br>-warmth<br>-respect; know agreements won't be abused |
| G(3). GIVING/MEANING | -listens<br>-helps sort through feelings<br>-helped move | -take time<br>-do things for friend<br>-give of self and talents without obligation<br>-give gifts<br>-meaning given when friend shares intimately<br>-life means something when able to support friend | -what is given is what person is<br>-pure giving without expectation brings happiness<br>-give whole self by saying absolutely anything.<br>-acceptance of gift brings fulfillment | | -touched when friend helps without expectation<br>-be there for friend in need<br>-extend time and energy | |
| G(4). SUPPORT | -being there in crisis<br>-strength for each other<br>-listen<br>-fill with hope | -be with other when necessary<br>-availability crux of friendship<br>-support system for each other<br>-support felt through few words<br>-faith in friend's competence | -mutual support<br>-can sense when other is in pain<br>-contact friend when they need support | -talk when troubled | -willingness to hear friend out<br>-help in rough periods of life<br>-draw upon and find direction in each other | -provide support for each other<br>-knows what is needed<br>-comfort in asking for support<br>-physical support e.g., hold hand when emotional |
| G(5). ACCEPTANCE | | -acknowledge feelings of other without fear<br>-acceptance without judgement or rejection<br>-feeling of incredibility in telling both positive and negative<br>-unspoken apologies<br>-able to be true self | -no judgement makes friend want to do right | | -accept differences | -feels good to be accepted for beliefs<br>-feel free to be self without fearing judgement, criticism<br>-feel okay about however one is feeling<br>-friend accepting and open about experiences |
| G(6). UNDERSTANDING | | -feels incredible to be understood<br>-try to understand friend's world<br>-willingness to "hear" each other | | -unspoken understanding | -friend understands when can't devote appropriate time to friendship | -friend tries to understand when can't devote appropriate time to friendship |

# TABLE 2

## First-Order Clustering of Themes:

| | CHARLENE | RICHARD | [illegible] | FRANKLIN | AUSTIN | LORI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G(7). EMOTIONAL TONE | -lot of fun<br>-enjoy life<br>-live to fullest<br>-intensity<br>-live in moment<br>-hysterical laughter<br>-discomfort when only one friend wants a sexual relation<br>-jealous of others in friend's life<br>-jealous of friend's social position<br>-loss of own identity when others begin to see the two friends as one unit<br>-being apart can take its toll<br>-one controls, sets limits without consulting friend<br>-only one friend feels friendship is special | -everything else pales in comparison to friend<br>-humour, laughter<br>-jealous of time restrictions that friends' friends impose<br>-lack of reciprocity in discussing personal issues limits disclosure in friendship<br>-good friend may be restricting in that one may isolate self from the rest of the world<br>-troubled by friend's pain<br>-large discrepancy exists in amount of liking for each other<br>-feel hurt and betrayed when friend doesn't understand<br>-one friend has sexual interest, other doesn't | -positive<br>-good<br>-vibrance<br>-excited<br>-intensity<br>-live vicariously<br>-continual demands<br>-lack of respect<br>-feeling of betrayal<br>-taken advantage of<br>-jealousy and possessiveness | -tremendous fun<br>-being playful<br>-sharing laughter<br>-having a good time<br>-others can influence opinions of friend<br>-one friend grows, other in stasis<br>-decision to no longer remain friends<br>-no longer return phone calls | -humorous<br>-fine line between intimacy and moving beyond with female friends | -fun<br>-enjoyment<br>-spontaneous times<br>-getting together on the spur of the moment<br>-new friends, outside activities take one away from friend<br>-wish more from friendship<br>-wish to be completely free to express all feelings as they occur<br>-conflict of sexual interests<br>-friend controlling, dominating, talks a lot about self<br>-not able to be honest<br>-feel sorry for other |
| H. FREEDOM | -lack of limits<br>-free to grow and expand<br>-utmost respect<br>-no jealousy or possessiveness<br>-no restrictions | -acceptance without judgement or rejection | -no obligation, possession, incrimination<br>-don't try to run my life<br>-don't try to hold me | -basic respect, valuing of friend<br>-friends not required to meet every day or week | | |
| I. NURTURANCE | | -honest communication | -honesty<br>-can criticize<br>-say anything to each other | | -honesty<br>-important to discuss sexual intentions<br>-set clear limitations | -communicate honestly over disagreements<br>-agreements, compromises.<br>-desire and effort to maintain friendship |
| J. DISSOLUTION | -friend says no to invitation too often<br>-gradually fades when one moves<br>-lives take different paths<br>-friendship never the same after too many hard times<br>-friend controls with little regard or respect for desires, needs and intentions<br>-grief, sadness in loss of friendship<br>-feel manipulated, battered<br>-resent differences when friend's basic values seem superficial, lacking in social consciousness | -lose interest in friendship<br>-honesty between friends lessens<br>-keep seeing person because don't like to reject them<br>-gradual reduction of contact<br>-friendship is energy draining<br>-dependency taxes friendship<br>-don't have guts to tell friend directly don't want to be friends | -communication blocked<br>-power play<br>-when trust destroyed never totally forgive<br>-critical incident where friendship terminates | -regret hurting friend in breaking off friendship<br>-gradual drifting apart | | -lives take different paths<br>-conscious decision not to remain friends |
| K. ISOLATION | -no one close enough to share pain with<br>-feel on edge<br>-fear being alone<br>-strong need for physical human contact | -overcome feelings of aloneness with friend<br>-feel isolated when friend doesn't understand<br>-feeling of aloneness when friend moves away | -painful to be unliked, without friends<br>-present friendship assumes great importance when never used to have friends | -loneliness through fear of revealing self<br>-free lonely when think friend will never understand | | |

An interpretation of the data showed certain themes throughout the various protocols. Some themes (such as support and emotional tone) were common to all co-researchers. However, not every theme was to be found within each co-researcher's protocol. For example, only Charlene and Austin mentioned old friends. This variation in themes could indicate that friendship is a disjunctive concept or, lack of thorough reflection of the experience of friendship. However, it is not the purpose of phenomenological research to reach consensual validation, but to fully explore the possibilities of the experience of friendship. Thus, a theme's inclusion required mention by only one co-researcher. The themes identified in Table 2 will be further discussed after a presentation of Table 3.

## Second-Order Clustering of Themes: Synthesizing the Data

At this stage redundancies in the data were eliminated; co-researchers' phrases were synthesized within each theme. For example, under theme "A" (Initial Meeting/First Impressions) the co-researchers indicated they had met their friend: at a party, at university, in a store, and in class. These statements were summarized by the phrase: "One has an initial meeting with a friend." This synthesis is presented in Table 3. The reader may judge the validity of this synthesis by comparing Tables 2 and 3 (note that alphabetic labelling of themes is consistent between tables).

The original protocols were reread in order to validate the thematic analysis and descriptions. In this process it was necessary to make sure that (a) all themes covered by the co-researchers were represented by the analysis, and (b) that no themes foreign to the original protocols were included in the analysis.

Table 3

SECOND-ORDER CLUSTERING OF THEMES

A. Initial Meeting/First Impressions
 1. One has an initial meeting with a friend.
 2. Beginning may be forgotten in long term friendship.
 3. One notices the other and may formulate an initial impression from appearance, body language, and means of expression.
 4. First impressions may be experienced by one's body (e.g., vibrance with attraction, tenseness with apprehension) and mind (e.g., thoughts formulated about the other).
 5. One uses first impressions to make judgements regarding desirability for future interactions.
 6. First impressions may limit one's effort to get to know another person.
 7. First impressions are often related to one's self-perception (e.g., one sees another person to be brighter than, more attractive than, more or less emotionally developed than oneself).
 8. One may intuitively know at the first meeting that the other will become a friend.

B. Beginning of Friendship
 1. After an initial meeting, one may not become friends with another until much later.
 2. Coming to view another person as one's friend may happen in different ways:
 a) One gets to know another person gradually through spending time together. This may involve one friend extending an invitation to the other to join in activities.
 b) The friendship may begin with a special incident.
 c) The formation of a friendship may be initiated by an occurrence seemingly beyond coincidence, as if an element of fate is involved.
 3. The distinct beginning of a long-term friendship may be forgetten.

C. Attraction

1. One is drawn toward a friend by attractive qualities (e.g., physical/sexual attraction; core qualities such as sensitivity, kindness).
2. One may be attracted to a friend who has qualities perceived to be missing in oneself.

D. Similarities

1. One often holds similar philosophies, values and beliefs with a friend (e.g., spiritual, non-traditional). One often sees eye to eye with a friend on basic considerations (e.g., quality of lifestyle, respect for others).
2. It feels good when one finds somone who shares a similar orientation to life, particularly if one's beliefs are not commonly held.
3. One may share a similar background with a friend (e.g., family, experiences) or a similarity in present life situations.
4. One may share similar interests with a friend (e.g., music, nature) and like to participate in similar activities (e.g., running, hiking).

E. Differences

1. Different interests bring vibrance to a friendship.
2. Differences between oneself and one's friends provide a balancing influence in life.
3. New things are learned and interests are expanded when a friend shares that which the friend is concerned with or knowledgeable about.
4. One may be attacted to a friend who has desirable qualilties missing in oneself. This provides an opportunity for learning and personal growth.

F. Evolving Process

1. There is a time lapse from when one first meets a person to when one considers that person to be a friend.
2. Initially, a friendship may develop incredibly rapidly as one wishes to spend every moment with a new found friend.
3. A friendship deepens as the two friends gradually begin to share more of their personal lives and physical surroundings with each other.
4. One learns to just "be" with a friend apart from organized activities.
5. There comes to be an ease of relating with a friend (e.g., one can sit in silence, one is comfortable just being oneself).
6. Over time (as life changes are shared, as support in times of crisis is shown, admiration for one's friend increases and the friendship is reaffirmed), the

friendship comes to be recognized as stable by the two friends.

6. One goes through highs and lows in a friendship. Resolving one's conflicts and differences with a friends can increase depth and openness in the relationship.

F(1) Developmental Process
1. One's friendships mean different things at different ages.
2. One develops personally through interactions with friends.
3. Growth in ways of relating with friends can be seen when one reflects upon old friendships; in terms of one's new growth and learnings, previous friendships may be seen as superficial and restricting.
4. One's friends fulfill needs for contact.
5. One gains a sense of belonging from one's friends.
6. Friends satisfy intellectual, cultural needs.

F(2) Over Time and Distance Separation
1. One's friendship survives even when apart; one can go for a long period of time without seeing a friend.
2. One can come together with a friend after being apart and still feel a closeness because of what has previously been shared.
3. One treasures contact from a friend in a friend's absence (e.g., letters).
4. Objects associated with one's friend take on importance in absence (e.g., a picture of friend, a gift).

F(3) Old Friends
1. Old friends provide wonderful memories.
2. One may maintain occasional continued contact with letters or calls to an old friend.
3. One still shares a special connection and can talk easily with an old friend even though one is not close any more (although there may be initial discomfort).

G. Shared World
1. One may share a full range of life experiences with a friend, both the good times and the bad (e.g., funerals, weddings).
2. One may engage in many activities with a friend (e.g., running, movies).
3. One may pass time with a friend doing by nothing in particular except being together. Things such as intimate discussions and going for walks take on a specialness when shared with one's friend.
4. One enjoys sharing the mundane and ordinary moments with a friend. One feels comfortable in asking a friend to join in the mundane.

5. One may share private understandings and inside jokes with a friend.
6. One may enjoy physical contact with a friend: roughhousing, gentle touches, holding a hand in support, sexual intimacy.

G(1) Fundamentals

1. One's friendship exists between two persons. The friendship is defined by the nature of the two persons in it.
2. One's friendship is unique; it can never be recreated with anyone else.
3. One's friends are special. One believes that most people have never been fortunate to experience a friendship as remarkable as one's own.
4. One sees their friendship as continuing into the future, perhaps forever.

G(2) Caring/Integrity

1. One has warm feelings and love for a friend.
2. One is genuinely concerned for a friend's feelings.
3. One may feel protective towards a friend.
4. One shows caring for a friend through kind words, affirmations, and actions.
5. One cares enough to be attentive to the wishes and interests of a friend.
6. One may trust a friend to keep confidentiality.
7. One respects a friend and knows agreements will not be abused.

G(3) Giving/Meaning

1. One gives of oneself and talents freely in a friendship; one listens to a friend and helps in sorting through feelings.
2. One gives of his/her whole self to a friend through honesty.
3. Pure giving in a friendship brings happiness to both the giver and the recipient.
4. Being able to share intimately with a friend adds meaning to one's life.
5. Being able to give support to a friend brings a purpose to one's life.
6. Acceptance of gift by a friend brings fulfillment.

G(4) Support

1. A friendship provides a mutual support system for the two persons.
2. One is available to a friend in times of crisis.
3. One is willing to listen and help a friend sort things through.
4. One seems to know when a close friend needs support and what support is needed.

5. One fills a friend with hope.
6. One shows support for a friend by indicating faith in the friend's competence.

G(5) Acceptance
1. One accepts differences in a friend.
2. With a close friend one is free to express all dimensions of oneself and know that one will be accepted without judgement or rejection.
3. It feels good to be accepted for whom one is.
4. Being accepted by a friend makes one want to do more for that friend.

G(6) Understanding
1. One is willing to actually "hear" what a friend is saying in an attempt to understand a friend's world.
2. One feels relieved to be understood.
3. One may be understanding in those times when a friend can't devote the appropriate amount of time to the friendship.

G(7) Emotional Tone
1. There is an intensity in friendship that allows one to live life to the fullest. Everything else pales in comparison to a new found friend.
2. One has fun with a friend and shares much laughter.
3. One experiences vibrance and aliveness with a friend.
4. One enjoys spontaneity and getting together on the spur of the moment with a friend.
5. One's friend is important to a feeling of health and mental well-being.
6. There may be difficulty if reciprocity is lacking in a friendship:
a) one friend values the friendship more than the other
b) only one friend has a sexual interest
c) lack of reciprocity in intimate conversations may limit one's disclosure
7. Others may influence one's opinion of a friend.
8. Difficulties may arise if one friend tries to control the friendship.
9. One may feel a loss of identity in a friendship when other people begin to think of the two friends as one.
10. There may be difficulties when one is jealous of a friend and/or of others in a friend's life.
11. Being apart from a friend can be difficult.
12. One can feel troubled by a friend's pain.
13. Difficulties arise with lack of freedom (one's friend is dependent) and respect (one's friend takes advantage and makes continual demands).
14. There may be difficulties when other interests and obligations prevent one from spending time with a friend.

15. One may wish more from a friendship (e.g., one may wish to be completely free to express all feelings as they occur).
16. One feels hurt and betrayed when a friend fails to understand.

H. Freedom
1. Lack of limits allows a friendship to grow and expand.
2. One has a basic respect for the integrity of a friend.
3. Without possession and feelings of obligation, one is able to give of oneself and one's time freely.
4. One needs some time to oneself in a friendship.

I. Nurturance
1. Nurturance requires a desire by the two friends to engage in a friendship.
2. Nurturance involves a conscious effort.
3. Through a process of honest communication new agreements are made.
4. Compromises are sometimes necessary.

J. Dissolution
1. There may be a gradual fading or altering of a friendship as one's life takes a different path from a friend's.
2. A friendship may end when one realizes one can no longer "contact" another when one's basic values have grown to a greater depth than a friend's.
3. A friendship may end when the friendship is no longer fulfilling: (e.g., it becomes negative and energy draining; trust is destroyed; respect is lost; invitations are turned down too often).
4. A friendship may terminate when small negative incidents build over time to a critical incident whereby the decision is made to no longer remain friends.
5. Honesty of communication lessens with one's friend as difficulties a friendship increase.
6. Leaving an old friend is difficult to do.
7. One may experience grief and sadness at the loss of a friendship.

K. Isolation
1. When one is unliked and without friends pain is felt.
2. One can overcome feelings of aloneness with friends.
3. One feels lonely when a friend does not understand.
4. When one is without friends to share with, one may feel "on the edge" and experience a strong need for physical human contact.

A discussion of Table 3 is not presented here. To reduce redundancy Tables 2 and 3 are discussed together in the following section.

## Integrative Analysis

In the previous steps of the research, essential themes of the experience of friendship were identified. These themes are not important in and of themselves. What is important is the comprehensive understanding of the experience of friendship that may be arrived at through the integration and expansion of these themes. As mentioned before, this understanding is the purpose of the study. A global description illuminating the friendship experience will now be presented and integrated with theoretical material where appropriate. Quotations from the protocols have been included to allow the reader a "feeling tone" for the co-researchers' experience. It is the hope of phenomenology that the data speak for themselves. (Again note that the alphabetic ordering of themes has been maintained).

### A. Initial Meeting/First Impressions

One meets one's friends at a variety of places ranging from university classes (e.g., Lori) to parties (e.g., Charlene). The meeting may seem haphazard, but it is conceivable that the two people were in the same place because of existing commonalities. For example, Lori and her friend had a common interest in academics; Charlene and her friend shared a desire to socialize.

Upon meeting someone, first impressions are made. Some of this is done in a pre-reflective way: that is, a bodily knowing before language and thought is brought forth (Valle & King, 1978). This may be a feeling about the other; an intuition or emotional wisdom (e.g., "I first met Franklin at school ten to eleven months ago and knew at that time that we would become friends, female intuition.").

Another part of this selection process comes through reflection. Sometimes, when another is judged in superficial ways, limitations may be set. As Richard recounted of Mike, who later became a close friend, "Because of Mike's appearance (he had very long hair and seemed somewhat aloof), I didn't make any effort to get to know him." We can see that although they had contacted each other, they had not really met. Richard was viewing Mike as an object with discrete traits, seeing only external features. He had not discovered the "person" Mike; the inner self and essence. A person's judgements can create barriers to friendship.

Sometimes an initial meeting with another leaves little impression (e.g., "She was in a class with me; she was just there and we didn't really have too much contact."). It may be only later that one is compelled to take notice.

One's perceptions of another may influence one's advances to that person. However, perceptions of one's self may also affect interactions with another; one's perceived worth dictates availability to another. Richard recounted of Wendy (whom he thought was the most striking female he'd ever seen), "I assumed she wouldn't be interested in me as a partner or a friend, consequently I didn't make much effort to know her better." One becomes closed, not available to be touched. In contrast, if an air of confidence is maintained, the other may be faced openly.

B. Beginning of Friendship

In an initial meeting one comes in contact with a friend-to-be. Time enters the script, for as each co-researcher indicated, time passed from those first few glimpses until the other was considered a friend. Sometimes, as with a childhood friend, the beginning is no longer distinct; the friendship just is. For another, the process of becoming friends may be a gradual one (e.g., "James and I met in my store approximately five years ago. He came in, I think, mostly due to his academic interests which include top line merchandise and top-line stores. However he did come back for what were a series of long 'gab-sessions.' Actually I guess we talked a lot about business but eventually our topics expanded to just about everything.").

Other friendships have a more definite beginning. As Richard recounted, "Our friendshihp began quite accidently - I was driving around the city one Friday night in an incredible state of depression, bordering on suicidal, when I decided the only solution to the pain was to get drunk...I headed to a bar...it turned out Mike and a friend of his were there and Mike invited me to join them. I remember that we talked for about five hours about quite personal issues as well as topical things." On looking closer at what transpired, the element of being in the right place at the right time is apparent. But more than this, an invitation is present. In an invitation, an extension of the self is made. An invitation asks another to join, to overcome a felt separateness, and be with another.

Up until this point, Richard had avoided Mike because of pre-judgements. But now Richard was in a state where these no longer mattered. Mike's long hair and his seeming aloofness were all background compared to the gift Mike gave in reaching out. Richard, in his suicidal state, was able to recognize the self that Mike was offering, and barriers were put aside.

Sometimes a friendship begins on a more spectacular note, as was the case with Charlene. "Somehow I intuitively knew that something 'big' was coming. Linda looked at me and asked if I was still a virgin. She sort of stammered but in a sense neither of us was very embarrassed. I felt a little stunned though. The day that this took place was a Monday and just that weekend I had lost my virginity. I never thought about what I was going to say. I simply told her that I had just lost my virginity that weekend. She started laughing and told me that she too had had intercourse for the first time that weekend. We laughed hysterically and talked quite intimately about our experiences. And that was it - our friendship had formed."

It is as if an element of fate beyond coincidence takes one beyond defenses put forth to ward others off. One is compelled to take notice and is drawn to another. As Charlene commented, "I don't believe that friends meet haphazardly." Keri had a similar experience with Juli, her friend-to-be, when she dreamed the exact layout of Juli's apartment without ever having seen it.

Those with a transcendental orientation sometimes take the idea of meetings through fate further. Shirley MacLaine (1983) and Richard Bach (1984) both talk of soul mates, people that come into our lives by design. Both of these people speak of the time delay between the initial meeting and the time the friendship was formed. They explain this in terms of readiness: during the initial contact one may not yet be ready to receive the other. One may have to grow and expand to a point where one could acknowledge and let the other into one's life as a friend.

## C. Attraction

In the process of attraction one is drawn to a friend; there is something which is pleasing about the other. Sometimes the attraction may be influenced by physical appearance, as we can see with Austin and his friend Jeff: "One thing that had to do with initial attraction was we had a great resemblance physically to each other...and were continually mistaken to be brothers." Richard's attraction to Wendy was one of physical appearance and sexual attraction.

Sometimes the initial attraction may be more to personality qualities, as was indicated by Charlene, Richard, Keri, and Franklin (e.g., "He is fun, yet sensitive, caring, nurturing."). The attraction to a friend may be enhanced if desirable characteristics which are perceived to be rare for that sex are possessed. Both Franklin and Richard mentioned the specialness of their male friends having characteristics they saw to be uncommon in other males (e.g., "His sense of spirituality and sensitivity...was particularly rare for me to find in a male friend.").

One may be attracted to another who is similar to oneself. At other times, one may be attracted to a model of what one desires to be. Charlene and Austin both spoke of this. Charlene exemplified this in speaking of an adolescent friend: "She was a socialite, something I wanted very much to be."

D. Similarities

Basic beliefs and philosophical values are similar between close friends; this was mentioned by each co-researcher (e.g., "My closest friends are what I am. The respect, trust and consideration for other people is very much alike.").

When one finds someone who orients to the world in a similar way, a mutual recognition takes place. The discovery of a common other whom one can understand, and be understood by, is especially valued when one's orientation to the world is not commonly held (e.g., "We share a unique commonality. We are both in therapy with a Jungian psychologist. We share a similar philosophy which not too many people hold. It feels good to me to be friends with someone who does hold some similar beliefs which are not popular."). One may experience a sense of support and self-confirmation.

Sometimes the bond between friends is the background they share. Both Franklin and Austin mentioned this (e.g., "Our friendship sprung out of the fact that we had many life situations in common....Both of our families were high profile in a small community. Both of us had older siblings who had made a name."). At times the bond is a similarity in present life experiences (e.g., "We discovered that we were both struggling with a decision whether or not to end our intimate sexual relationship; mine with my husband and Carly with her boyfriend of six and a half years.").

As well as common beliefs and similar life experiences, friends may hold similar interests and engage in similar activities. This was again something that was mentioned by each co-researcher (e.g., "We both have a strong love for music and a strong appreciation for the outdoors, (things like camping, hiking). An offshoot of that is that we both enjoy physical activity....There is a lot of overlap between us.").

### E. Differences

Similarities in a friendship do not preclude differences. The male co-researchers stressed the importance of differences in their friendship. The friendship may be vibrant because one's friend has different interests; this provides more to talk about. When a friend exchanges information with another about that which the friend is knowledgeable, one is given the opportunity to expand previous boundaries. Through his friends, Richard has developed an appreciation for cats and an interest in neurophysiology. Franklin has learned about the stock market and computers from his friend James.

A friend may provide a balancing influence to one's life (e.g., I know he's good for me in that sense in that he's far less conservative than I am, something of a risk-taker. I appreciate that influence in my life.").

Sometimes the attraction to another is mainly a result of differences, as when the other has qualities one finds lacking in one's self (e.g., "I've really sought out the females in our support group....I think part of that has to do with a real drive for change on my behalf, and that is to be more caring, gentle." We can see that differences in one's friendship can provide a valuable vehicle for growth and an extension to one's previous ways of being-in-the-world. Differences may add a richness to one's friendship.

F. Friendship as an Evolving Process

As we have already seen there is a time lapse from the first meeting until a friendship is formed. The development may be incredibly rapid, as in the case of Richard and Wendy who initially spent "hours upon hours talking about very personal things." This is a process of delightful discovery, with something new to be found at every turn.

Initially, in the course of getting to know one another, there may be moments of discomfort. A self-consciousness may exist, a dualism between mind and body. Spurling (1977) talks of this: "There are times in timidity...for example, where I do not experience my body as a spontaneous expression of my intentions but as a barrier or mask separating 'myself' from the world" (p. 23). One may move slowly with what one says and how one acts, deciding just how much one will let a friend know (e.g., "He was several years ahead of me in university, so initially I felt I had to act much smarter than I was. I felt somewhat strained as I would carefully think out what I would say. Because Mike was important to me, it mattered what he thought. With others I just wouldn't care.").

Friendship is a gradually evolving process. During initial stages a friendship tends to be activity oriented with the focus externally based on a task. One engages in a process of "doing" such things as studying, running, and discussing topical events.

Gradually, a focused task is no longer necessary. One is allowed the luxury to just "be" with a friend with no particular goal in mind. In not needing to fill every moment, one may be receptive to what can emerge with a friend. Once discomforting silences may now be shared with ease (e.g., Since so much of our interaction had revolved around personal issues, I initially felt really uncomfortable when these issues 'ran out' for the moment. It took almost the entire afternoon before I realized and felt comfortable with the fact that Wendy liked my company, even if it wasn't particularly entertaining, exciting, or emotional. We were just two friends passing the time together, doing nothing in particular except being together. Adjusting to being able to just 'be' with Wendy took a while for me, but being able to do so made me feel better about myself and our relationship.").

Development in a friendship can be reflected by a change in physical surroundings. As one comes to know a friend more fully, there may be a shift from public meeting places to more private and intimate locales. This was expressed by both Richard and Lori (e.g., "After the class ended we went to the power plant.... During the summer we would get together and walk along the river valley trails....Then we began to make dinner together either at her place or at mine."). In letting a friend share a more personal environment, one opens oneself and provides an entrance to a sharing of one's daily life.

One's friendship may go through highs and lows, as Lori and Austin mentioned. Both indicated that, rather than being detrimental to the friendship, conflict resolution may serve to strengthen and add depth to a friendship (e.g., "We certainly had our disagreements and I guess making up, resolving those differences, or ignoring them strengthened the friendship.").

A friendship may also be strengthened when one provides support in times of crisis. A friendship often endures life changes such as a marriage by one of the friends. As one spends more time with a friend, admiration increases and the friendship is reaffirmed. All of these factors combine to provide a recognition of the stability of the relationship.

### F(1) A Developmental Process

One's friendships mean different things at different ages. Personal development occurs through interactions with friends (e.g., "Leslie helps me grow, and in turn my growth helps her."). Growth in ways of relating with friends can be seen upon reflection of old friendships (e.g., In retrospect, this [an adolescent friendship] seems trite and superficial.").

Part of the growth process in friendship entails having one's needs met (e.g., "Being truly appreciated by Wendy gave me a new found sense of esteem."). This is interesting because Maslow's (e.g., 1970) theory of motivation implies that friends could be very important in satisfying the basic social needs (love and belongingness and esteem). A further implication is that gratification of these basic needs with a friend may be an important factor in personal growth.

### F(2) Over Time and Distance Separation

During the course of a friendship one may have to go long periods of time without seeing a friend (as when one moves to another city or country). Five out of the six co-researchers mentioned this experience. When one is absent from a friend, contact may still be maintained by way of letters or telephone calls. This allows one a means of maintaining contact with a friend, letting them know that one cares. In this way a relationship can continue even though the two are apart. Communication between friends becomes especially valuable over distance (e.g., "I treasured her letters.").

In a similar fashion, when a friend is absent, objects associated with a friend assume importance. Looking at a picture may bring back memories and keep the friend present in one's mind. Richard noted the importance of his banjo which was a gift from a friend now living in a different city.

When one does get together with a friend after a long absence, the comfort may be such that it is like there was no separation at all (e.g., "We won't see each other for four months...and it's like we never stopped seeing each other."). However, sometimes the initial moments can be slightly discomforting (e.g., "It takes a few minutes to get re-acquainted, but after that it's like we've never been apart.").

F(3) Old Friends

Old friends reserve a special place in one's life. They can provide rich memories from the past in an almost nostalgic manner. Out of the fondness that one still has, occasional contact to an old friend may be maintained by letters or telephone calls. Because so much has been shared, one still feels a special connection and comfort in relating still exists (e.g., "It's funny; even though we are not close we still share special secrets and are now able to talk easily once again....And though we share very little of the detail of our day to day lives, we still share some very special connection.G. Shared World

Much of one's life is shared with a friend. One engages in activities such as running or going to dinners. Life experiences and changes are experienced with a friend; the good times as well as the bad (e.g., " In terms of life changes we've been through a lot. Both our parents attempted suicide. He was involved in a car accident I was a passenger in. We've been through first jobs together, discussed first sexual experiences with each other, first long term relationships with females. We've helped each other move. Lately we've gone through personal loss, death.").

One may be with a friend with no particular focus in mind except to spend time together. Part of the specialness of a friendship is being able to share the ordinary things in life. Enjoyment is found in doing the mundane together; sitting over tea, fixing cars (e.g., "Mike is one of the few friends I enjoy doing the mundane, like grocery shopping, with. He is also one of the few that I do not feel uncomfortable asking to join me in the mundane.").

A shared intimacy exists between friends. Each co-researcher mentioned the ability to talk closely with their friend (e.g., "We come together and talk about everything under the sun."). One may share physical intimacy with a friend as well. This may range from roughhouse physical contact (as Austin described), to non-sexual hand holding or linking arms (as described by Lori), to sexual intercourse (as described by Charlene) (e.g., "We feel very comfortable hugging and sometimes when we are out walking we link arms or put our arms around each other.").

One may have private understandings or inside jokes that are meaningful only to the two individuals (e.g., "We continue to be mistaken as brothers. I think we've enjoyed playing that up. We've sent cards to each other signed your brother, that sort of thing."). A comraderie is developed; a shared bond in a special world.

### G.(1) Fundamentals

In a friendship a world is created that exists solely between the two friends. A friendship is defined by the individuals in it; their interests, attitudes, and personhood (e.g., "What I can give in a friendship is what I am.").

Each co-researcher saw their friendship as being very special. Charlene, Keri and Austin held monumental values about their friendships, believing few people to have experienced such a wonderful friendship. Much of the specialness of a friendship lies in its uniqueness (e.g., "All of these things...bonded our relationship together which was something that I did not (could not?) share with anyone else."). There are endless possibilities for evolution in a friendship, the only limits being those either member may bring to it. As Charlene related in reference to her friendship with Murray, "There are no restrictions, thus the only thing it can do is grow and expand."

The nature of the relationship between friends is one of equality. An important dimension of friendship is that one neither dominate, nor be subservient to a friend. This was emphasized by the women co-researchers who have left friendships when another has tried to control them. In addition, Keri mentioned the importance of a friend being on a similar psychological level.

One sees a friendship as continuing into the future. Keri and Charlene saw no reason for their friendships not to last forever. Sometimes, one fantasizes as to what a future friendship will be like (e.g., "We can see that we'll go through ...the life cycle and then when our husbands are dead (because we assume that they're going to die first) we'll move into a group home together and go travelling.").

### G(2) Caring/Integrity

In a close friendship a genuine caring is present. One demonstrates this warmth and caring for a friend in various ways: through kind words, affirmations, and actions (e.g., "When I need to cry over a broken relationship Andrew is there to... fill me with hope and positive affirmations of love."). The love one has for a friend may involve a type of protectiveness (e.g., Richard reported feeling concern for Wendy when she would date other men).

One orients to a friend with a special attentiveness; one comes to know what is special to them. One learns their favorite music, their pastimes, their passions in life (e.g., "Mike and I had gone out for coffee...and on the way back home got on to the subject of music, particularly the banjo, which I expressed some interest in. A few days later I went over to Mike's and was met at the door with a banjo.").

Caring for a friend leads to a respect for one's integrity. One can trust that a friend will not misuse the relationship (e.g., "We both needed support so we decided that it would be okay to call each other at any time. We both knew that we would not abuse this agreement.").

There may also be a trust in the confidentiality of the relationship. Keri, "I can trust her enough to say these things...I know that with her she'll agree or laugh or even disagree but it won't go anywhere."

G(3) Giving/Meaning

In a friendship one gives all that is oneself freely to the other. One may give of one's interests and talents (e.g., "Wendy needed a car as she was moving out of town for a year. Since I knew about cars and she didn't, it just seemed self-evident to me that I should go out and buy a car for her, check it out to make sure eveything was okay, and then sell it to her knowing that it was roadworthy, keeping in mind all the time that she was under no obligation to buy it."). In the process of giving, the other's life becomes enriched.

One gives of one's self in other ways such as being available to listen to another in times of need, being understanding, and sharing humour. One also gives of oneself through honesty. Although it may be easier to be less than direct with a friend, one is willing to face the difficulties that being honest may bring (e.g., "With her, I can say absolutely anything; it doesn't matter how vulgar, how bizarre, how stupid, how painful. She'll think about it or she'll tell me to go fuck right off. With other people that I'm friends with, I won't say these things because I know they won't be able to accept it. In essence I can't give them my whole self."). Honesty affords a totality which gives depth to the friendship.

To give freely is not necessarily to sacrifice. On the contrary, giving may enhance the life of the giver by adding meaning and a sense of fulfillment (e.g., "Jodi's acceptance of what I have to give is my fulfillment."). Giving is also important to the recipient; when a friend gives freely one is deeply touched.

Yalom (1980) recognized the importance of altruistic giving as an important source of meaning in one's life. He also recognized the potential for the ripple effect, whereby many others may be affected from this giving. Fromm (1956) also commented on what one person gives to another:

> In thus giving of his life, he enriches the other person, he enhances the other's sense of aliveness by enhancing his own sense of aliveness. He does not give in order to receive; giving is in itself exquisite joy. But in giving he cannot help bringing something to life in the other person, and this which is brought to life reflects back to him; in truly giving, he cannot help receiving that which is given back to him. Giving implies to make the other person a giver also and they both share in the joy of what they have brought to life. In the act of giving something is born, and both

persons involved are grateful for the life that is born for both of them (p. 24).

G(4) Support

Mutual support and strength is provided within a friendship. A friend can draw upon and find direction in the other. A friend can fill one with hope. Support implies an availability on the part of a friend; a willingness to be there in crisis. The support one gives can be verbal; an offering of comforting words. At other times, a willingness to listen and be a silent presence is enough. Support can be afforded in physical ways; by holding hands or offering a shoulder to cry on.

As Keri and Lori mentioned, one may have an intuitive knowing of when a friend needs support and the nature of the support needed. With a close friend, this sensing can seemingly extend beyond one's normal mode of consciousness (e.g., "The funny thing is that whenever she's in pain she won't phone me, but those will be the times when I phone her and vice versa. It's really bizarre; it just blows us away. We're just so close I think we know.").

Support need not always be given in times of sorrow. One may encourage a friend, and help the other aspire to fuller potentials. Through confidence in a friend's goals, projects, and plans one may help a friend to summon the needed strength to set forth on an individual path. As

Richard indicated, faith in a friend's competence is important.

G(5) Acceptance

Four of the co-researchers mentioned the importance of acceptance in friendship. An examination of this word might provide a clearer understanding of this process. A thesaurus indicates acceptance to be a reception, a recognition, an acknowledgement. An openness is implied; a willingness for one to receive and welcome a friend. Availability enters the gestalt of acceptance. The more of oneself that is available (that is the more one accepts in one's self), the more one can accept in a friend (McCown, 1978).

When one is accepted by a friend, judgement and rejection are laid aside. This leaves one free to express all dimensions of one's self beneath the social masks ordinarily worn. A feeling of goodness, incredibility of good fortune, and relief may be experienced in being able to be oneself (e.g., "It feels very good to be accepted for my beliefs....I therefore also feel comfortable expressing a variety of emotions from joyfulness to painfulness."). Acceptance may have a compounding effect; when one is accepted by a friend, one may wish to do more for that friend.

Acceptance of a friend does not mean that one condones every action. It does mean that one has enough respect for a friend's integrity that an understanding is sought (e.g., "Something that keeps us together...is his support for me, his ability to accept my differences. He said, 'Well Austin did this and I don't agree, but I know he must have had a reason for that.' He was willing to hear me out."). A friend recognizes the virtues and faults of another without judging the other's essential being.

G(6) Understanding

In a friendship one is willing to enter and understand a friend's world. One is willing to listen to a friend; to go beyond the words to what is really intended. When one has the feeling that they are truly understood one's center may be deeply touched (e.g., "It seemed so incredible to tell a person things about myself, not all of which were at all positive, and not be judged or rejected, but actually understood.").

A friendship may be permeated by unspoken understandings. There may be an understanding that a friend will try to be there when help is needed. A friend may also understand when other obligations interfere with a friendship (e.g., "I really haven't had what I think is the appropriate amount of time to devote to the friendship, yet he's understood and we certainly pick it up at times when the two of us do have more time to spend.").

G(7) Emotional Tone

The joyfulness that a friend adds to one's life was mentioned by each co-researcher. With a friend one has fun; one is playful and laughter is shared. To imagine a life without humour is to imagine a sombre existence indeed.

With a close friend, one is no longer bound by pre-set plans and may ask the other to join at a moment's notice. This spontaneity may draw one to life with a joyful intensity (e.g., "Our philosophy was that life was to enjoy. It was precious and lived to the fullest. We often flew to Vancouver for the weekend for concerts and went camping with lots of people.").

An energizing and nourishing process occurs within the shared intensity. One's body becomes alive, and bursts forth with a vibrance one rarely feels alone. It may be these spontaneous meetings that one enjoys most. As Charlene and Richard portrayed, this nourishment can lead to a feeling of health and mental well-being. (e.g., "When I'm with Murray I feel so healthy - like life is now, not yesterday or tomorrow."

However, friendships often involve difficulties as well as joyfulness. When one spends extended time with a friend, there is the possibility of coming to be perceived as an amalgamated unit. When this happens, one may feel a loss of identity and freedom as a unique individual (e.g., "I guess when two people are inseparable people begin to think of you as one."). Loss of autonomy may be experienced when one friend tries to control the relationship or is dependent upon the other. Jealousy and possession may also be troubling.

Discomfort may arise when there is a lack of reciprocity in the friendship. This may occur when one friend perceives the friendship to be of more value (e.g., "I don't feel comfortable in a friendship when there is a large discrepancy in how much we like each other, or at least if the friend likes me much more than I like him or her."). Difficulties may occur in cross-sex friendships when only one friend is sexually interested in the other (e.g., " I can recall a situation in which I told a man who I had a sexual involvement with that I only wanted to be friends because I was no longer sexually interested. However, ater a time I decided that I did not want to be friends with him because he seemed to still be sexually interested in me which interfered with our friendship."). One may share less with a friend who reveals little personal information than one would if the friend were prone to intimate disclosure.

Sometimes a friend cannot fulfill all of one's expectations. One may wish more from a friendship than is given (e.g., "I recall periods where I did not have the kind of friendship that I would like to have and to some extent I still do not have that kind of friendship. I would like to have the kind where I could feel completely free to express all of my feelings as they occur and to have my friend to do that in return and to know that the friendship could survive and become stronger."). When one feels misunderstood by a friend a sense of hurt and betrayal may be experienced.

At other times difficulties are due more to an an unfortunate situation than to the friend. One is often affected when a friend is in a dilemma (e.g., " When my friend is troubled or in pain, I am troubled and in pain. Sometimes more so than my friend, because I cannot act on the pain, but just must watch and be with my friend as s/he deals with it in his/her own way."). Sometimes a friendship is strained when one must be apart from a friend for a period of time, either due to distance (as when one friend moves), or other obligations (such as university coursework) (e.g., "When I went back to school in the fall I explained to Carly that I would not have as much time to get together with her....A period of a couple of months went by at one point in which we had not talked to each other....She told me that she was disappointed that I didn't call.").

### H. Freedom

In a friendship one has a basic respect for the integrity of the other. One has enough consideration for the other to allow a freedom without control, obligation, or possessiveness (e.g., "There was no obligation for time, there was no possession between the two of us. There was mutual respect and honesty and intimacy."). When one is not required to meet every day or every week, the time spent with a friend becomes freely given. When there are no restrictions placed on a friendship it is free to grow and expand. Fromm (1956) spoke of respect and freedom:

> Respect is not fear and awe; it denotes, in accordance with the root of the word (respicere = to look at), the ability to see a person as he is, to be aware of his unique individuality. Respect means the concern that the other person should grow and unfold as he is. Respect, thus, implies the absence of exploitation. I want the loved person to grow and unfold for his own sake, and in his own ways, and not for the purpose of serving me. If I love the other person, I feel one with him or her, but with him as he is, not as I need him to be as an object for my use. It is clear that respect is possible only if I have achieved independence; if I can stand and walk without needing crutches, without having to dominate and exploit anyone else. Respect exists only on the basis of freedom: "l'amour est l'enfante de la liberte" as an old French song says; love is the child of freedom, never that of domination (p. 28).

## I. Nurturance

Sometimes a friendship seems to run on its own. At other times it seems that the relationship is in need of support to continue. Nurturance requires a conscious effort by the two friends and a desire to remain in the friendship. It is sometimes the case that one becomes busy with other obligations which takes one away from the friendship. When this happens one may be required to exert extra effort to maintain contact with a friend. In an attempt to satisfy both parties, agreements may be made; compromises are sometimes necessary (e.g., "When I went back to school in the fall I explained to Carly that I would not have as much time to get together with her. She said she understood, that that was okay as long as we still got together once in a while because she wanted to maintain our friendship, as I too wanted to do. We decided to get season's tickets together to the Phoenix Theatre both saying that at least we will know we will get together during those times.").

When a difficulty arises, it requires a willingness to engage in a process of honest communication. Four of the co-researchers mentioned this. This process can prevent disagreements from smouldering and expanding into unforseen difficulties. Honest communication may be important in setting clear limitations on a friendship. It may be important for a male and female friend to discuss sexual intentions so that misunderstandings do not occur (e.g., "Wendy was fully aware of my sexual attraction, but made it very clear that was not her interest.").

J. Dissolution of Friendship

Friendship is not always forever. One grows and changes with time. When one's basic values grow to a greater depth than a friends, the friendship may no longer be fulfilling (e.g., "I began to resent Sandy's superficiality and lack of social consciousness."). As one's life takes a different path from a friend's, or when a friend moves away, the friendship may alter to a less intense form or eventually dissolve.

When those characteristics which are important to friendship (e.g., trust, respect, freedom, nurturance) are no longer present the friendship may end. Breeches in the essentials of friendship may bring a shift in the relationship which may never be regained (e.g., "I never totally forgave her for that."). At the point a friendship is no longer nourishing one may decide the friendship is no longer worth pursuing (e.g., "My contact with Bernie was negative, something I had never consciously realized before. I found Bernie to be energy-draining...and I perceived him to be quite dependent on me and our friendship. I decided at that point to end our friendship.").

One may leave a friendship in different ways. This is a process the co-researchers described to be difficult and sometimes painful. One is often less than honest in deciding to leave a friendship. This may be because there is a desire not to hurt a friend (as described by Lori) or because one does not have "the guts" to tell a friend directly (as described by Richard). A friendship may end with a gradual reduction of contact or a distinct decision to no longer remain friends. The latter may happen when small negative incidents build over time to a critical incident.

Leaving a friendship is a difficult process. As well as feeling regret for hurting a friend, grief and sadness may be experienced (e.g., "This was the first of my friendships to fade and it was almost as if I went through some sort of grieving process.").

### K. Isolation

When one has no friends painful loneliness may be experienced. This experience may bring a strong desire to be with other people. This type of isolation (isolation from other individuals) is defined by Yalom (1980) as interpersonal isolation. Being with a friend can help overcome this feeling of separateness.

At other times, distance may be felt from others when parts of oneself are kept private (e.g., "I have often felt lonely, even though I had friends....I was afraid to risk revealing my deep wound."). This is termed intrapersonal isolation by Yalom (1980) and refers not only to formal defense mechanisms in the psychoanalytic sense but to any form of fragmentation of the self.

Still others experience isolation when a friend does not understand. As Richard pointed out, lack of understanding may cause a sense of betrayal. This isolation goes beyond the interpersonal and intrapersonal forms of isolation. It is an existential isolation where a recognition exists of "a separation between the individual and the world" (Yalom, 1980, p. 354).

Sometimes a person may seek isolation when one needs time to oneself (e.g., "There is a basic understanding which does not require us to meet daily, or weekly.").

# CHAPTER 6

# GENERAL DISCUSSION

In the present phenomenological study, the integrative analysis allowed the data to speak for itself, inviting the reader to see the possibilities of friendship. Natural scientific research would call for a list of final themes which could be used to categorize friendship. However, as was indicated earlier by Wright's (1978) self-criticism of his definition of friendship (1974) this would merely leave us with a list of unrelated variables. Yet, it is important to highlight the points of value in this study so that others can thereby enhance their friendships. What follows is a description of the experience of friendship (so far as this study in concerned) which allows for the interrelated emergence of themes.

## A Description of the Experience of Friendship

In order to become friends two people must first contact each other. First impressions are made in the initial encounter: These may facilitate or hinder the development of a friendship. The beginning of a friendship may be forgotten or be so gradual that it escapes notice. At other times this beginning may be distinct. Sometimes it seems that an element of fate brings the friends together.

Friends may be attracted to one another by physical, psychological, or spiritual attributes. (Spiritual is used here in a non-religious sense to indicate an understanding of the integration of self with humanity and Being). Friends often share similarities. These may be life experiences shared in the past or present, basic philosophical or core beliefs, or a similarity of interests. Friends also share differences which may add a richness to the relationship. Differences between friends provide an opportunity to learn new skills and concepts. They may also provide a balancing influence.

Friendship is a dynamic process. Over time the friendship evolves to greater depths; an ease in relating develops. Friends come to share more of their private lives. Their bond may be strengthened when friends support each other in times of crisis, and when conflicts are resolved. Friends can come together after being apart and still feel a closeness. Objects that serve as reminders of friends take on importance when friends are apart. Friendship is part of a developmental process which may aid in personal growth.

Friendship is a special world which looks toward a future. It is a caring relationship shared between two people and can never be re-created with anyone else. Friends may share life experiences, activities, intimate discussions, physical intimacy, and private understandings.

Friends share day-to-day experiences and the ordinary moments of life. Caring and integrity are shown through genuine concern, protectiveness, kind words and actions, attentiveness, keeping of trust, and respectfulness.

Friends may show support through availability in crisis and through affirming competence. They may accept one another without judgement or rejection. Friends may show a willingness to understand one another. They may give of themselves freely in a friendship, providing a sense of meaning for both the giver and recipient. Friends may have a basic respect whereby they allow each other the freedom to be themselves without possession and obligation. Being with friends brings a vibrant intensity to life and can lead to a feeling of health and mental well-being.

Friendships require nurturance. Through honest communication agreements and compromises can be made. Sometimes difficulties are experienced within the relationship through such dynamics as different rates of personal development, jealousy, lack of reciprocity, and domination. As friends are so important to one another, feelings of hurt and betrayal may accompany these difficulties. When difficulties are not resolved, dissolution of a friendship may occur. The dissolution of a friendship may lead to isolation.

## Contributions and Tentative Conclusions of the Present Research Study

Previous phenomenological research (Becker, 1973, 1984; Sadler, 1970) identified essential characteristics of "true" and "important" friendships. Similar themes were identified in the present study (e.g., emotional tone, freedom). However, the open-ended nature of the research questions used here allows for a more encompassing investigation of the experience of friendship. For example, looking at what friendship is not (i.e., examining what it feels like to be without a friend, and choosing not to be someone's friend) provides for a more well-rounded description of friendship.

This extended description of friendship furthers the concept of friendship as a process by including the meeting of friends, the careful nurturance necessary to allow for the fullest experience of friendship, and the dissolution of friendship. In contrast to previous studies, greater emphasis is placed upon the full range of emotions and experiences encountered in friendship relations. For example, the emotional tone of friendship includes difficulties along with joyfulness.

In much research a summary statement of the results would be appropriate. The results of this study could be summarized but this would be redundant after the wealth of detail previously presented. However, tentative conclusions regarding the essence of the "richest experience" of friendship so far as this study is concerned are suggested below.

## Friendship as Movement Towards Personhood

"In my highest friendships I can be myself without the social mask."

Implicit in this statement is the recognition that people are unique beings before any collective identity. This uniqueness is something that Roszak (1978) termed personhood. People are more than the assigned duty or role that classifications such as intellectual, mother, male or female indicate. Essential to each person is a self that exists logically prior to culture; a self which awaits discovery.

The self being referred to can be seen to include the body, mind and spirit (with spirit being used in a non-religious way to indicate the ability to find wholeness with the self, others, and Being). The self is the unpredictable potentiality of people, the capacity for growth and creativeness. In this way the self is different for each person.

The highest degree of friendship provides an atmosphere which affords the opportunity for self-discovery. The process of self-discovery can be done by negation: that is, people begin to learn about themselves by learning whom they are not. As comfort develops within the friendship relationship, they are allowed the movement towards self-emergence in an on-going process of development.

With their friends people begin to experience the acceptance which allows them the freedom to drop their social roles and enables them to experience a full range of emotional tone. For example, as people are able to drop the roles and conditioning that tell them such things as males must be emotonally strong, they are allowed to discover the part of themselves that sometimes feels fragile and cries out for support. This allows for the experiencing of a full range of emotions. Parallel to the Taoist tradition of yin and yang, friends come to understand the complementarity of their inner natures: that is, the relation between such things as love and hate, joy and sorrow. A depth is added to their way of being-in-the-world.

> When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.
>
> When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight (Gibran, 1923, p. 19).

### Friendship as Self-Transcendence

Self-discovery must include the finding of whom the person could become, as well as identifying that which they are not. People must find what interests them; what they authentically wish to do. The support given to people by their friends allows them to build on their inner strengths, to overcome their fears, and find the confidence to begin to be themselves. If people are to discover their uniqueness, they must come to explore a path that is theirs alone.

The love found in the richest experience of friendship is not binding, but allows for a freedom which arises from respect for the sanctity of the person. The friendship relation depends on both people. Through friendship they are changed and transformed; they transcend the selves which they used to be. In the beginning, friends touch each others peripheries; they are acquaintances. Eventually, through the process of dropping societal conditioning and role expectations, they come to reach their centres, their essential nature which transcends the "self as ego" they have come to know. As two people begin to meet at their centres a self-revelation takes place; this meeting without fear is love.

In keeping with the belief of the interconnectedness of all things (e.g., Heidegger, 1977; Whitehead, 1941; Wilbur, 1977) the communion which occurs when friends allow each other to touch the deepest parts of themselves provides a recognition ofthe receptacle of Nature or Being which encompasses the individual selves. Thus, friendship can be seen as one way to overcome felt separateness; it can be seen as one of the many modes of expression of the internal relations of the cosmos.

## Friendship as Respect for Integrity

For friends to allow one another to touch their depths requires a great risk. In opening themselves to be touched they express a willingness to expose their essence. This implies an inherent vulnerability, as they never know for sure what their friend will do, if they will be hurt or betrayed. Thus, there is a great trust in the integrity of the other at the basis of friendship.

Being respectful of the wholeness of friends suggests acceptance. In order for friends to support the growth of their relationship they must be willing to see their friend in totality, accepting the "dark" as well as the "bright" side of their natures.

## Friendship as Commitment

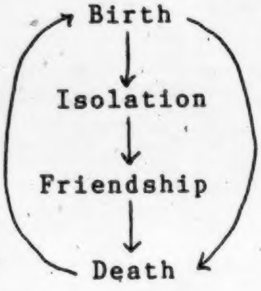
The blossoming of the world created by two friends depends on the commitment of each to the relationship. Friendship requires careful nurturance if it is to reach its fullest heights. Just as an untended garden soon becomes overrun with weeds, so will an uncared for friendship soon become wrought with distance and misunderstanding.

This nurturance requires a sensitivity between friends, and the desire to listen and understand. It requires the willingness to experience the despair as well as the ecstacy of friendship, something which previous phenomenological studies tended to gloss over. The elevated views of friendship presented by previous studies (not to mention movies, books, and television) would lead us to believe that friendship is effortless, automatic, and ever-perfect.

There is a danger in adopting this perspective as it leads people to view difficulties in a friendship as an immediate cause for dissolution. The data presented in this present study show that difficulties can lead to dishonesty in a friendship. It further shows that if honest communication is maintained friendship may be led to heightened quality. This honesty in a relationship may be exceedingly difficult, for it is often easier to bend the truth. Yet, without honesty (that is, the willingness to express oneself fully), the relationship loses its depth and regains a superficiality. While the process of honest communication between friends and the willingness to put themselves in a vulnerable position by revealing their essential selves may be painful, a strengthened bond is given the opportunity to arise from the depths which are explored together.

### The Cyclicle Nature of Friendship

A reality found in the present study is that friendship may aid in overcoming isolation. This is important, as many people in our society today report increasing feelings of alienation (e.g., May, 1969). Friendship can be seen as complementary to isolation. A conception of this relatedness is portrayed diagramatically below.



Isolation and friendship parallel a psychological birth and death process. This ebb and flow functions within and between friendships. Isolation is experienced upon the death or dissolution of a friendship. These feelings of isolation are alleviated with the birth of a new friendship. However, within any given friendship, people may find a need for isolation; a temporary death within the friendship only to allow for a rebirth.

Friendships are not always forever. There seems to be a natural cycle which allows for personal development. Through their friends people come to know themselves. When they come to a point where friendships are outgrown and their lives go separate ways, a psychological death is experienced. As people move onward on their paths in life, new friendships are born. With them come the opportunities they hold for people to learn about themselves, others and Being.

The points raised above are important in light of the research (e.g., Bell, 1981) which demonstrated that friendships may be therapuetic. One of the goals of many therapies is to remove isolation (e.g., May, 1969), something which friendships may help to promote. If friendships are therapeutic it is important that people know how to maintain these relationships in an active manner. This active responsibility is also important in removing feelings of isolation. As we saw, friendships need nurturance in order to grow.

## Methodological Concerns

It must be realized that the description of the experience of friendship necessarily remains unfinished as there are always possibiities for more to be said. Further, it must be understood that the data can never be free of my biases. For example, I may have attributed undue significance to the process of personal growth in friendship due to my counselling orientation. Valle and King (1978) exemplify:

> The point can never be reached where all of the co-researchers' presuppositions, which guide research at every phase, can be uncovered or dealt with, or where the full assessment of existential significance is achieved (Valle & King, 1978, p. 69).

Another potential difficulty lies in the open-ended nature of the questions used to gain information from the co-researchers. This lack of restriction means that there are certain variables I remain ignorant of. For example, the comparative quality of the two friendships described by the co-researchers was not identified. This leaves potentially large qualitative differences between cross-sex and same-sex friendships unknown. A possibly important distinction that I was aware of, but did not account for, is whether friends chosen for description were from the present or the past.

It was an advantage to have worked with graduate students who were engaged in a reflective process of their relationships and had the ability to articulate their experiences of friendship. Of course, their remembered experience may be different from their acutual lived-experience. Also, the vastness of the topic of friendship demanded that only selected portions of their experience be communicated. Forgetting or differential emphasis may be involved here. However, in the present study, the fact that the description calls forth in the reader the experience of friendship justifies using selected data.

Natural scientific researchers may find the method employed in the present research study to be overly interpretive. I concede that interpretation certainly took place as I pulled the themes from the data. However, natural scientific researchers also interpret their data. The difference between approaches is that I pulled themes out of the data whereas natural scientific researchers place data into preconceived themes. For example, we saw that Goldman et al. (1981) rated open-ended questionnaires according to pre-set categories of friendship expectations based on Bigelow (1977). Rather than pulling themes from data, natural scientific researchers push data into themes. Further, most traditional research asks about subjects' conceptions of friendship rather than their lived-description or "stories" of friendship. The research here attempted to go directly to the life-world.

## Implications for Further Research

In doing this research I became aware of other areas within friendship which could be studied from a phenomenological perspective. The structures of male and female friendships could be compared for sex-specific differences. The experience of friendship could be further explored to see how friends facilitate personal development. Age differences could also be explored. For example: What is the experience of friendship for a child? The pursuit of the essence of friendship could lead us to many possible paths-- "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step"(Lao-tse).

## Unexpected Findings

The vastness of the co-researchers' responses led to unexpected findings. Something which struck me as interesting was that each co-researcher experienced their friendship as unique or special. Nobody else could have a friendship like that. Although it is obvious that friendships are important, I was surprised at the extent to which they permeated people's lives. Most aspects of their lives were shared with friends including their own personal growth. Perhaps it is due to their background in psychology, but it was interesting that the co-researchers were so aware of their own developmental patterns as reflected in friendship. Perhaps the most surprising concept to me was that same-sex and cross-sex friendships showed little difference. The differences were more between the co-researchers approaches to their friends than within co-researchers approaches to different-sex friends.

As well as finding these particularly interesting aspects of friendship, this work was rewarding in other ways. Engaging in the process of reflection necessary for this phenomenological investigation affected the lives of myself and the co-researchers. Friendships were re-evaluated; their importance in our lives was recognized.

Charlene had written about two friends from the past. After writing her protocol she contacted both of these friends, an experience she found enriching. Richard sent a copy of his protocol to the friend he had described and received a lengthy written response. Franklin had chosen to describe a friend with whom he had consciously decided to terminate the relationship. Shortly after completing his description, Franklin ran into Patti at a high school reunion. They have maintained contact since.

In closing, the scope of the resulting description of friendship provided by the present study was broader than that portrayed in previous research. Main themes furthered by this research were (a) the process of friendship (b) the potential of friendship for personal development and (c) the complementary nature of the fullest range of emotional tone. Tentative conslusions were drawn about the "richest" experience of friendship as far as this study is concerned. These conclusions referred to friendship as a movement toward personhood and as an opportunity for self-transcendence. The cyclicle nature of friendship was affirmed. Finally, the necessity for commitment and respect for integrity within the friendship relation was illuminated.

Your friend is your needs answered.
He is your field which you sow with love and reap with thanksgiving.
And he is your board and your fireside.
For you come to him with your hunger, and you seek him for peace.

When your friend speaks his mind you fear not the "nay" in your own mind, nor do you withhold the "ay."
And when he is silent your heart ceases not to listen to his heart;
For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires, all expectations are born and shared, with joy that is unacclaimed.
When you part from your friend, you grieve not;
For that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence, as the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.
And let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening of the spirit.
For love that seeks aught but the disclosure of its own mystery is not love but a net cast forth: and only the unprofitable is caught.

And let your best be for your friend.
If he must know the ebb of your tide, let him know its flood also.
For what is your friend that you should seek him with hours to kill?
Seek him always with hours to live.
For it is his to fill your need, but not your emptiness.
And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures.
For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed (Gibran, 1923, p. 58).

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